

The book cover features an ornate decorative border. At the top, a floral garland of roses and leaves arches over the title. The sides are framed by two tall, fluted columns. Each column is topped with a decorative capital and a small floral arrangement, and is flanked by a scrollwork element. The base of each column is a large, ornate urn. A wide, horizontal floral garland of roses and leaves spans the bottom of the cover, connecting the two columns.

The Spy

A Tale of the
Neutral Ground

By
James Fenimore Cooper

Abridged by
Beatrice A. Griffin
With an Introduction by
M.A.L. Lane
Illustrated by L.J. Bridgman

Ginn and Company

Boston - New York - Chicago - London
Atlanta - Dallas - Columbus - San Francisco

COPYRIGHT, 1917, 1924, BY GINN AND COMPANY

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

225.10

The Athenæum Press
GINN AND COMPANY • PRO-
PRIETORS • BOSTON • U.S.A.

PREFACE

AT THE time when Cooper was writing his novels the reading public had no objection to long-drawn-out methods of telling a story. The lengthy descriptions and prosy beginnings were accepted as a necessary part of desirable fiction. To-day the demand for abridgment of these novels seems entirely legitimate and proper. Miss Beatrice A. Griffin, of the city schools, Tacoma, Washington, has rendered this service of shortening "The Spy" for young readers, without sacrificing any of the essentials of the story, and with due regard for the language of the original. Only such omissions have been made as will facilitate appreciation by the modern student of literature.

The heroic figure of Harvey Birch, who endured a lifelong misjudgment and contempt for the sake of the country he loved, has its own lesson in a time when warfare is too often welcomed as an opportunity to win personal fame and glory.

INTRODUCTION

A HUNDRED years ago an American novel was almost unknown. English reviewers asked scornfully, "Who reads an American book?" and the most loyal patriots on this side of the sea were quite content with English publications. Americans were too busy making a nation and putting it into running order, too much occupied with clearing the wilderness and establishing comfortable homes, to spend precious time in writing fiction. There was also a feeling among them that there might be something queer and provincial in their homemade literature, just as many a man to-day would look askance at a suit of clothes put together in his own house. Even educated readers would have been a little afraid to admire any book until it had been approved by foreign critics.

All this was to be changed within a few months, and largely through the work of one man. James Cooper (afterwards known as James Fenimore Cooper), who was destined to be the author of a large number of successful novels, was born in Burlington, New Jersey, six months after the Constitution had been adopted by the new nation. In 1790, while he was still a baby, his parents moved to New York State, where Mr. Cooper owned much land near Otsego Lake. Here a house was built on the edge of a vast wilderness, stretching hundreds of miles to the westward, the haunt of bears and wolves, and of the fierce cougar or native panther. Not far away were regions where bands of Indians still roamed and hunted. On winter evenings the boy listened entranced to the stories the neighbors told of hardship and hairbreadth escapes. When

there was no one else to entertain him, his mother would fill him with delight by relating some of the old romances that had been dear to her girlhood.

At the age of thirteen James was ready to enter Yale College. He had been well taught as a private pupil in Albany, but, as he tells us himself, he played all the first year at college and was never fond of study. He spent more time in the woods and fields than with his books, and though he learned much in these long solitary walks, it was not the kind of knowledge that counted toward a degree. During his third year, to his father's great disappointment, he was dismissed from college. While he might not have been more successful as a novelist had he finished his college course, he would at least have become more skilled in the art of writing, and might have escaped much of the criticism he afterwards received.

It was a long time before the idea of writing books entered Cooper's head. In his boyhood, it is true, he had planned an elaborate romance, which he and a playmate—the son of the village printer—were to produce together. As both boys disliked the manual labor of writing, they tried to set up the type without any preliminary shaping of the story. Naturally the chapters grew shorter and shorter, until finally they stopped abruptly, and the great work was never finished. Certainly a literary career was far from Cooper's thoughts when he left college.

His father now decided that he should enter the navy. At that time there was no naval college, and candidates usually served their apprenticeship on some merchant vessel. Cooper was accordingly placed on a ship bound for England, and for nearly a year was rated as a common seaman. Trying as many of his experiences were, they proved to be of great value when he came to write his sea stories.

The young man, now enrolled as a midshipman, was sent to Lake Ontario to help build a brig in anticipation of

possible trouble with England. The war clouds passed over, but again work that may have seemed profitless at the time came to have much significance. The days he spent on the shores of the wide lake, the adventures in the trackless forest, the knowledge gained of Indian ways and traits,—all these were of inestimable help when he wrote his *Leatherstocking Tales*.

Before many months had gone by, Cooper became dissatisfied with his prospects in the navy. He had met his future wife, and they were eager to have a home of their own. On New Year's Day, 1811, he was married to Miss De Lancey, and before the summer was over he had retired from the navy. His first attempt at housekeeping was in a cottage so tiny that he named it "Closet Hall"; he next planned a large stone farmhouse near his old home in Cooperstown, but this was burned before the builders had finished it; and at length he settled down in Westchester County, not far from his wife's birthplace, where he spent many happy years.

One day Cooper was reading aloud a new novel recently received from England. It was a dull story, and finally he threw it down impatiently, declaring that he could write a better book himself. Much amused at the notion, his wife challenged him to attempt it, and he immediately set to work. The novel called "Precaution" was the result.

It is not to be wondered at that the book had small success. In the first place the author was dealing with English society, of which he knew almost nothing. It was carelessly written and still more carelessly printed. Indeed, Cooper himself said that no modern novel was so badly printed. This made it hard to read, for "periods turned up in the middle of sentences, while the places where they should have been knew them not."¹ Still the author's

¹ Thomas R. Lounsbury, "James Fenimore Cooper," p. 17. American Men of Letters Series.

friends were not discouraged, and they begged him to try again. They were sure that if only he would write about things with which he was familiar, he would win attention, and in this way he could bring his beloved country into favorable notice abroad.

This was the spur that led Cooper to begin another story. He decided to place it in the time of the Revolution in order to give it special interest at home. As for the form, that of the historical novel introduced by Walter Scott had proved to be popular and convenient, especially for stories of adventure tinged with patriotic fervor. The locality was suggested by the neighborhood in which Cooper was then living. During the war it had been known as the Neutral Ground, for here, between the royal barracks in New York City and the American outposts on the Hudson, lived a population made up of loyal patriots and British sympathizers, watching each other with suspicion and distrust, but outwardly at peace. Cooper's wife belonged to a Tory family, and keen as was his love for his country, he was able to understand and appreciate something of their point of view. This made his treatment of the royalists in his books singularly fair and unprejudiced. The whole region was saturated with anecdote and tradition, for Westchester had been swept again and again by the waves of battle. There was scarcely a road across which the soldiers had not marched and countermarched, or a strip of woodland that had not sheltered some hard-pressed fugitive.

With the time and place of his story fixed, Cooper turned his attention to the plot. He remembered that one afternoon, when he had been visiting ex-Governor Jay, his host had entertained him with the adventures of a spy employed by the government during the war. The outline of this narrative seemed suitable for the purpose, and the work was begun.

The book was written rapidly, and was sent to the printer with almost no correction. So haphazard was the fashion in which it progressed that the second volume was not even started until the first was in type. To please the publisher, who was becoming alarmed at the length of the tale, Cooper actually wrote, printed, and paged the last chapter before he had planned what was to come in between the final pages and the earlier portion.

The basis of the narrative as furnished by Mr. Jay was this: When he was in Congress he had been chairman of a secret committee to prevent the English from securing recruits for their regiments. One of the agents employed by the committee was a poor and ignorant man who showed unusual courage and devotion in the work assigned to him. It was his business to follow up the royal officers, to discover when and where men were to be enlisted, to enroll himself as a member of the new troops, and then to obtain as much information as possible about the enemy's plans. The man was frequently arrested by the patriots, who charged him with taking money from the British and who despised him beyond measure. Once he barely escaped hanging, and was saved only by secret and special orders from headquarters. When Mr. Jay was appointed minister to Spain he obtained from the government a suitable sum to pay the man for his services, and arranged a midnight meeting with him. The payment was quietly refused. "The country needs the money," said the spy, "I am able to work and can earn my living." And thus, without recognition of any kind, he went his way.

"The Spy" was published anonymously. It became popular almost at once, both at home and abroad, and was translated into several languages. A ludicrous mistake marked the first French translation. It will be remembered that Mr. Wharton's country house, presumably shaded by locust trees, was named "The Locusts"; this was carelessly

rendered "Les Sauterelles" (The Grasshoppers). Unfortunately the story presently implied that the horses of the dragoons who were watching Henry Wharton were fastened to these same grasshoppers!

The merits of the novel were obvious. It was fresh and original, thoroughly clean and wholesome, and its earnest patriotism commended it to all classes of readers. Harvey Birch soon became one of the recognized heroes of fiction. So great was his popularity that there were even those who claimed to be the spy himself, and the agent of a certain French prefect of police went so far as to model his life on that of the peddler's. He took the same name, and at the end of his career, still true to his model, refused the offered compensation.

In time the people of Westchester began to talk of the book as if it were so much history. A certain farmhouse was shown to visitors as the one from which Birch and young Wharton escaped, and an old clock was pointed out as the very one which Frances watched for the stroke of nine.

"The Spy" was followed by more than a dozen novels which the American boy still reads with interest and enjoyment. Among these the Indian stories "The Deerslayer," "The Last of the Mohicans," and "The Pathfinder" hold first place, although from a literary point of view Cooper's descriptions of the sea and of the handling of a ship are unsurpassed. The famous fifth chapter of "The Pilot" is often cited as proof of the writer's power in handling a nautical theme.

It is easy to find fault with Cooper's literary style. He took little pains to polish or prune, his plots and characters were never very carefully planned, his introductions are long and wearisome, and his mannerisms are often annoying. There is little reality in his stories, and absurdly impossible things take place. His heroes go to sleep on inconvenient occasions, and his women characters —

invariably called by him "females" — are too proper and angelic to have much human charm. As one critic said of them, "The only thing they do successfully is to faint." To the healthy taste of the twentieth century such heroines are insipid and dull.

Perhaps the strongest proof of his real claim to greatness is the fact that in spite of these faults he still holds his place. Even the liberties he sometimes takes with the commonly accepted rules of English grammar have not brought him into disfavor, but are forgiven for the sake of the interest and force of his narrative.

Cooper was more than sixty years old when he wrote his last novel. The closing years of his life were spent almost entirely in the old home at Cooperstown, where he died on the day before his sixty-second birthday. He had at times been engaged in fierce public controversies, but his last months were serene and peaceful. He lived to enjoy the confidence and admiration of a new generation of readers and the unfailing devotion of his immediate family and friends. The book which brought to him his first fame is considered by some critics as that most likely to preserve it, and it is certainly to be remembered that the first novel contributed by America to the world's fiction is still held in high esteem.

THE SPY



"IS THIS, THEN, THE DWELLING OF HARVEY BIRCH?" (PAGE 3)

THE SPY

CHAPTER I

IT WAS near the close of the year 1780 that a solitary traveler was seen pursuing his way through one of the numerous little valleys of Westchester. The easterly wind, with its chilling dampness and increasing violence, gave unerring notice of the approach of a storm, and the experienced eye of the traveler was turned in vain, through the darkness of the evening, in quest of some convenient shelter, in which he might obtain such accommodations as his purposes required. Nothing, however, offered but the small and inconvenient tenements of the lower order of the inhabitants, with whom, in that immediate neighborhood, he did not think it either safe or politic to trust himself.

The county of Westchester, after the British had obtained possession of the island of New York, became common ground, in which both parties continued to act for the remainder of the War of the Revolution. A large proportion of its inhabitants, either restrained by their attachments, or influenced by their fears, affected a neutrality they did not feel. The lower towns were, of course, more particularly under the dominion of the crown, while the upper, finding a security from the vicinity of the continental troops, were bold in asserting their revolutionary opinions and their right to govern themselves.

At the sound of the tread of the noble horse ridden by the traveler, the mistress of the farmhouse he was passing at the time might be seen cautiously opening the door of the

building to examine the stranger, and perhaps communicating the result of her observations to her husband. The passage of a stranger, with an appearance of somewhat doubtful character, and mounted on an animal which, although unfurnished with any of the ordinary trappings of war, partook largely of the bold and upright carriage that distinguished his rider, gave rise to many surmises among the gazing inmates of the different habitations; and in some instances, where conscience was more than ordinarily awake, to no little alarm.

Tired with the exercise of a day of unusual fatigue, and anxious to obtain a speedy shelter from the increasing violence of the storm, the traveler determined, as a matter of necessity, to make an application for admission to the next dwelling that offered. An opportunity was not long wanting; and, riding through a pair of neglected bars, he knocked loudly at the outer door of a building, of a very humble exterior, without quitting his saddle. A female of middle age, with an outward bearing but little more prepossessing than that of her dwelling, appeared to answer the summons. The startled woman half closed her door again in affright, as she saw, by the glare of a large wood fire, a mounted man so unexpectedly near its threshold; and an expression of terror mingled with her natural curiosity, as she required his pleasure. His request was listened to with evident unwillingness, and, while yet unfinished, it was eagerly interrupted by the reply—

“I can’t say I like to give lodgings to a stranger in these ticklish times. I’m nothing but a forlorn lone body; or, what’s the same thing, there’s nobody but the old gentleman at home; but a half mile further up the road is a house where you can get entertainment, and that for nothing. I am sure ’t will be much convenienter to them, and more agreeable to me; because, as I said before, Harvey is away—I wish he’d take advice, and leave off wandering; he’s

well to do in the world, by this time ; and he ought to leave off his uncertain courses, and settle himself, handsomely, in life, like other men of his years and property. But Harvey Birch will have his own way, and die vagabond after all ! ”

The horseman had slowly turned his horse towards the bars, and was gathering the folds of an ample cloak around his manly form, preparatory to facing the storm again, when something in the speech of the female suddenly arrested the movement.

“ Is this, then, the dwelling of Harvey Birch ? ” he inquired, in an involuntary manner, apparently checking himself as he was about to utter more.

“ Why, one can hardly say it is his dwelling,” replied the other, drawing a hurried breath, like one eager to answer ; “ he is never in it, or so seldom that I hardly remember his face, when he does think it worth his while to show it to his poor old father and me. But it matters little to me, I’m sure, if he ever comes back again or not ; — turn in the first gate on your left ; — no, I care but little, for my part, whether Harvey ever shows his face again or not — not I ” ; — and she closed the door abruptly on the horseman, who gladly extended his ride a half mile further, to obtain lodgings which promised both more comfort and greater security.

Sufficient light yet remained to enable the traveler to distinguish the appearance of the grounds around the building which he was now approaching. The house was of stone, long, low, and with a small wing at each extremity. A piazzá, extending along the front, with neatly turned pillars of wood, together with the good order and preservation of the fences and outbuildings, gave the place an air altogether superior to the common farmhouses of the country. After leading his horse behind an angle of the wall, where it was in some degree protected from the wind and rain, the traveler threw his valise over his arm, and knocked loudly at the entrance of

the building for admission. An aged black soon appeared ; and without seeming to think it necessary, under the circumstances, to consult his superiors — first taking one prying look at the applicant, by the light of the candle in his hand — he acceded to the request for accommodations. The traveler was shown into an extremely neat parlor, where a fire had been lighted to cheer the dullness of an easterly storm and an October evening. After giving the valise into the keeping of his civil attendant, and politely repeating his request to the old gentleman, who arose to receive him, and paying his compliments to the three ladies who were seated at work with their needles, the stranger commenced laying aside some of the outer garments which he had worn in his ride.

On taking an extra handkerchief from his neck, and removing a cloak of blue cloth, with a surtout of the same material, he exhibited to the scrutiny of the observant family party a tall and extremely graceful person, apparently fifty years of age. His countenance evinced a settled composure and dignity ; his nose was straight, and approaching to Grecian ; his eye, of a gray color, was quiet, thoughtful, and rather melancholy, the mouth and lower part of his face being expressive of decision and much character. His dress, being suited to the road, was simple and plain, but such as was worn by the higher class of his countrymen ; he wore his own hair, dressed in a manner that gave a military air to his appearance, and which was heightened by his erect and conspicuously graceful carriage. His whole appearance was so impressive and so decidedly that of a gentleman that as he finished laying aside the garments, the ladies arose from their seats, and, together with the master of the house, they received anew, and returned, the complimentary greetings which were again offered.

The host was by several years the senior of the traveler, and by his manner, dress, and everything around him

showed he had seen much of life and the best society. The ladies were a maiden of forty, and two much younger, who did not seem, indeed, to have reached half those years. The bloom of the elder of these ladies had vanished, but her eyes and fine hair gave an extremely agreeable expression to her countenance; and there was a softness and an affability in her deportment that added a charm many more juvenile faces do not possess. The sisters, for such the resemblance between the younger females denoted them to be, were in all the pride of youth.

After handing a glass of excellent Madeira to his guest, Mr. Wharton, for so was the owner of this retired estate called, resumed his seat by the fire, with another in his own hand. For a moment he paused, as if debating with his politeness, but at length threw an inquiring glance on the stranger, as he inquired —

“To whose health am I to have the honor of drinking?”

The traveler had also seated himself, and he sat unconsciously gazing on the fire while Mr. Wharton spoke; turning his eyes slowly on his host with a look of close observation, he replied, while a faint tinge gathered on his features —

“Mr. Harper.”

“Mr. Harper,” resumed the other, with the formal precision of that day, “I have the honor to drink your health, and to hope you will sustain no injury from the rain to which you have been exposed.”

Mr. Harper bowed in silence to the compliment.

The young ladies had again taken their seats beside the workstand, while their aunt, Miss Jeanette Peyton, withdrew to superintend the preparations necessary to appease the hunger of their unexpected visitor.

There was an evident desire on the part of the host to enter into conversation, but either from an apprehension of treading on dangerous ground, or an unwillingness to

intrude upon the rather studied taciturnity of his guest, he several times hesitated before he could venture to make any further remark.

"I wish, from the bottom of my heart, this unnatural struggle was over, that we might again meet our friends and relatives in peace and love."

"It is much to be desired," said Harper, emphatically, again raising his eyes to the countenance of his host.

"I hear of no movement of consequence since the arrival of our new allies," said Mr. Wharton, shaking the ashes from his pipe, and turning his back to the other, under the pretense of receiving a coal from his youngest daughter.

"None have yet reached the public, I believe."

"Is it thought any important steps are about to be taken?" continued Mr. Wharton, still occupied with his daughter, yet unconsciously suspending his employment in expectation of a reply.

"Is it intimated any are in agitation?"

"Oh! nothing in particular; but it is natural to expect some new enterprise from so powerful a force as that under Rochambeau."

Harper made an assenting inclination with his head, but no other reply, to this remark; while Mr. Wharton, after lighting his pipe, resumed the subject.

"They appear more active in the South; Gates and Cornwallis seem willing to bring the war to an issue there."

The brow of Harper contracted, and a deeper shade of melancholy crossed his features; his eye kindled with a transient beam of fire, that spoke a latent source of deep feeling. The admiring gaze of the younger of the sisters had barely time to read its expression before it passed away, leaving in its room the acquired composure which marked the countenance of the stranger, and that impressive dignity which so conspicuously denotes the empire of reason.

The elder sister made one or two movements in her chair before she ventured to say, in a tone which partook in no small measure of triumph —

"General Gates has been less fortunate with the earl than with General Burgoyne."

"But General Gates is an Englishman, Sarah," cried the younger lady, with quickness; then, coloring to the eyes at her own boldness, she employed herself in tumbling over the contents of her workbasket, silently hoping the remark would be unnoticed.

The traveler had turned his face from one sister to the other, as they had spoken in succession, and an almost imperceptible movement of the muscles of his mouth betrayed a new emotion, as he playfully inquired of the younger —

"May I venture to ask what inference you would draw from that fact?"

Frances blushed yet deeper at this direct appeal to her opinions upon a subject on which she had incautiously spoken in the presence of a stranger; but finding an answer necessary, after some little hesitation, and with a good deal of stammering in her manner, she replied —

"Only — only — sir — my sister and myself sometimes differ in our opinions of the prowess of the British." A smile of much meaning played on a face of infantile innocence as she concluded.

"On what particular points of their prowess do you differ?" continued Harper, meeting her look of animation with a smile of almost paternal softness.

"Sarah thinks the British are never beaten, while I do not put so much faith in their invincibility."

The traveler listened to her with that pleased indulgence with which virtuous age loves to contemplate the ardor of youthful innocence; but making no reply, he turned to the fire, and continued for some time gazing on its embers in silence.

Mr. Wharton had in vain endeavored to pierce the disguise of his guest's political feelings; but, while there was nothing forbidding in his countenance, there was nothing communicative; on the contrary, it was strikingly reserved; and the master of the house arose, in profound ignorance of what, in those days, was the most material point in the character of his guest, to lead the way into another room, and to the supper table. Mr. Harper offered his hand to Sarah Wharton, and they entered the room together; while Frances followed, greatly at a loss to know whether she had not wounded the feelings of her father's inmate.

The storm began to rage with great violence without; and the dashing rain on the sides of the building awakened that silent sense of enjoyment which is excited by such sounds in a room of quiet comfort and warmth, when a loud summons at the outer door again called the faithful black to the portal. In a minute the servant returned, and informed his master that another traveler, overtaken by the storm, desired to be admitted to the house for a shelter through the night.

At the first sounds of the impatient summons of this new applicant, Mr. Wharton had risen from his seat in evident uneasiness; and, with eyes glancing with quickness from his guest to the door of the room, he seemed to be expecting something to proceed from this second interruption, connected with the stranger who had occasioned the first. He scarcely had time to bid the black, with a faint voice, to show this second comer in, before the door was thrown hastily open, and the stranger himself entered the apartment. He paused a moment, as the person of Harper met his view, and then, in a more formal manner, repeated the request he had before made through the servant. Mr. Wharton and his family disliked the appearance of this new visitor excessively; but the inclemency of the weather, and the uncertainty of the consequences, if he were refused

the desired lodgings, compelled the old gentleman to give a reluctant acquiescence.

Throwing aside a rough greatcoat, the traveler very composedly took the offered chair, and unceremoniously proceeded to allay the cravings of an appetite which appeared by no means delicate. But at every mouthful he would turn an unquiet eye on Harper, who studied his appearance with a closeness of investigation that was very embarrassing to its subject. At length, pouring out a glass of wine, the newcomer nodded significantly to his examiner, previously to swallowing the liquor, and said, with something of bitterness in his manner —

"I drink to our better acquaintance, sir; I believe this is the first time we have met, though your attention would seem to say otherwise."

"I think we have never met before, sir," replied Harper, with a slight smile on his features, as he observed the movements of the other; but appearing satisfied with his scrutiny, he turned to Sarah Wharton, who sat next him, and carelessly remarked —

"You, doubtless, find your present abode solitary, after being accustomed to the gayeties of the city."

"Oh! excessively so," said Sarah, hastily. "I do wish, with my father, that this cruel war was at an end, that we might return to our friends once more."

"And you, Miss Frances, do you long as ardently for peace as your sister?"

"On many accounts I certainly do," returned the other, venturing to steal a timid glance at her interrogator; and, meeting the same benevolent expression of feeling as before, she continued, as her own face lighted into one of its animated and bright smiles of intelligence, "but not at the expense of the rights of my countrymen."

"Rights!" repeated her sister, impatiently; "whose rights can be stronger than those of a sovereign; and what

duty is clearer than to obey those who have a natural right to command?"

"None, certainly," said Frances, laughing with great pleasure; and taking the hand of her sister affectionately within both of her own, she added, with a smile directed towards Harper—

"I gave you to understand that my sister and myself differed in our political opinions; but we have an impartial umpire in my father, who loves his own countrymen, and loves the British,—so he takes sides with neither."

"Yes," said Mr. Wharton, in a little alarm, eying first one guest, and then the other; "I have near friends in both armies, and I dread a victory by either, as a source of certain private misfortune."

Harper, disregarding these observations, now desired to be shown to his place of rest. A small boy was directed to guide him to his room; and wishing a courteous good night to the whole party, the traveler withdrew. The knife and fork fell from the hands of the unwelcome intruder, as the door closed on the retiring figure of Harper; he arose slowly from his seat; listening attentively, he approached the door of the room—opened it—seemed to attend to the retreating footsteps of the other—and, amidst the panic and astonishment of his companions, closed it again. In an instant the red wig which concealed his black locks, the large patch which hid half his face from observation, the stoop that had made him appear fifty years of age, disappeared.

"My father!—my dear father!" cried the handsome young man; "and you, my dearest sisters and aunt!—have I at last met you again?"

"Heaven bless you, my Henry, my son!" exclaimed the astonished but delighted parent; while his sisters sank on his shoulders, dissolved in tears.

The faithful old black, who had been reared from infancy in the house of his master, and who, as if in mockery of his

degraded state, had been complimented with the name of Cæsar, was the only other witness of this unexpected discovery of the son of Mr. Wharton. After receiving the extended hand of his young master, and imprinting on it a fervent kiss, Cæsar withdrew. The boy did not reënter the room; and the black himself, after some time, returned, just as the young British captain was exclaiming —

“But who is this Mr. Harper? — is he likely to betray me?”

“No — no — no — Massa Harry,” cried the negro, shaking his gray head confidently; “I been to see — Massa Harper on he knee — pray to God — no gemman who pray to God tell of good son come to see old fader — Skinner do that — no Christian!”

Cæsar’s poor opinion of the Skinners seems to have been justified by what we learn about them. They were a distinct order of the community whose sole occupation was, under the pretense of patriotism, to relieve their fellow citizens of any surplus wealth. This unlicensed robbery often accompanied by bloodshed was even sanctioned by military authority. The Skinners were much like the “cowboys” of the British, who, however, were more experienced and worked with more system under efficient leaders. Cæsar, however, was too much of a loyalist to include the latter class in his denunciation of the Skinners.

CHAPTER II

THE father of Mr. Wharton, though a native of England, had settled in the colony of New York. He had wished to have his son enter the army or navy of England, but, upon his death, his son, who had taken his degree from an English university, was led by the attractions of the great estate left him to doubt the advantage of a soldier's life, for which he had no inclination. Finally, love decided the matter ; and Mr. Wharton, in becoming a husband, ceased to think of becoming a soldier. For many years he continued happy in his family, and sufficiently respected by his countrymen, as a man of integrity and consequence, when all his enjoyments vanished, as it were, at a blow. His only son, the youth introduced in the preceding chapter, had entered the army, and had arrived in his native country but a short time before the commencement of hostilities, with the reinforcements the ministry had thought it prudent to throw into the disaffected parts of North America. His daughters were just growing into life, and their education required all the advantages the city could afford. His wife had been for some years in declining health, and had barely time to fold her son to her bosom, and rejoice in the reunion of her family, before the revolution burst forth, in a continued blaze, from Georgia to Massachusetts. The shock was too much for the feeble condition of the mother, who saw her child called to the field to combat against the members of her own family in the South, and she sank under the blow.

Mr. Wharton, after making a provision against future contingencies, by secretly transmitting the whole of his money to the British funds, determined to retire to the country.

He possessed a residence in the county of Westchester; and having been for many years in the habit of withdrawing thither during the heats of the summer months, it was kept furnished, and ready for his accommodation.

He withdrew to "The Locusts," with a heart rent with the pain of separating from all that was left him of a wife he had adored, but in obedience to a constitutional prudence that pleaded loudly in behalf of his worldly goods. His handsome town residence was inhabited, in the mean while, by his daughters and their aunt. The regiment to which Captain Wharton belonged formed part of the permanent garrison of the city of New York, and the knowledge of the presence of his son was no little relief to the father in his unceasing meditations on his absent daughters. But Captain Wharton was a young man and a soldier; his estimate of character was not always the wisest; and his propensities led him to imagine that a redcoat never concealed a dishonorable heart.

The house of Mr. Wharton became a fashionable lounge to the officers of the royal army, as did that of every other family that was thought worthy of their notice. Whether or not it was owing to the fact that the sixteen-year-old Frances received none of the compliments which fell to the lot of her elder sister, in the often repeated discussions on the merits of the war, between the military beaux who frequented the house, it is certain their effects on the sisters were exactly opposite. It was much the fashion then for the British officers to speak slightly of their enemies; and Sarah took all the idle vamping of her dangles to be truths. The first political opinions which reached the ears of Frances were coupled with sneers on the conduct of her countrymen. At first she believed them; but there was occasionally a general who was obliged to do justice to his enemy in order to obtain justice for himself; and Frances became somewhat skeptical on the subject of the inefficiency of her countrymen.

Colonel Wellmere was among those who delighted most in expending his wit on the unfortunate Americans; and, in time, Frances began to listen to his eloquence with great suspicion, and sometimes with resentment.

It was on a hot, sultry day that the three were in the parlor of Mr. Wharton's house, the colonel and Sarah seated on a sofa, engaged in a combat of the eyes, aided by the usual flow of small talk, and Frances occupied at her tambering frame, in an opposite corner of the room, when the gentleman suddenly exclaimed —

"How gay the arrival of the army under General Burgoyne will make the city, Miss Wharton!"

"Oh! how pleasant it must be," said the thoughtless Sarah, in reply; "I am told there are many charming women with that army; as you say, it will make us all life and gayety."

Frances shook back the abundance of her golden hair, and raised her eyes, dancing with the ardor of national feeling; then laughing, with a concealed humor, she asked —

"Is it so certain that General Burgoyne will be permitted to reach the city?"

"Permitted!" echoed the colonel; "who is there to prevent it, my pretty Miss Fanny?"

Frances was precisely at that age when young people are most jealous of their station in society; neither quite a woman, nor yet a child. The "pretty Miss Fanny" was too familiar to be relished, and she dropped her eyes on her work again, with cheeks that glowed like crimson.

"General Stark took the Germans into custody," she answered, compressing her lip; "may not General Gates think the British too dangerous to go at large?"

"Oh! they were Germans, as you say," cried the colonel, excessively vexed at the necessity of explaining at all; "mere mercenary troops; but when the really British regiments come in question, you will see a very different result."

"Of that there is no doubt," cried Sarah, without in the least partaking of the resentment of the colonel to her sister, but hailing already in her heart the triumph of the British.

"Pray, Colonel Wellmere," said Frances, recovering her good humor, and raising her joyous eyes once more to the face of the gentleman, "was the Lord Percy of Lexington a kinsman of him who fought at Chevy Chase?"

"Why, Miss Fanny, you are becoming a rebel," said the colonel, endeavoring to laugh away the anger he felt; "what you are pleased to insinuate was a chase at Lexington was nothing more than a judicious retreat — a — kind of —"

"Running fight," interrupted the good-humored girl, laying great emphasis on the first word.

"Positively, young lady —" Colonel Wellmere was interrupted by a laugh from a person who had hitherto been unnoticed.

There was a small family apartment adjoining the room occupied by the trio, and the air had blown open the door communicating between the two. A fine young man was now seen sitting near the entrance, who, by his smiling countenance, was evidently a pleased listener to the conversation. He rose instantly, and coming through the door, with his hat in his hand, appeared a tall graceful youth, of dark complexion, and sparkling eyes of black, from which the mirth had not yet entirely vanished, as he made his bow to the ladies.

"Mr. Dunwoodie!" cried Sarah, in surprise; "I was ignorant of your being in the house; you will find a cooler seat in this room."

"I thank you," replied the young man, "but I must go and seek your brother, who placed me there in ambuscade, as he called it, with a promise of returning an hour ago." Without making any further explanation, the youth bowed politely to the young women, distantly and with hauteur to

the gentleman, and withdrew. Frances followed him into the hall, and blushing richly, inquired, in a hurried voice —

“But why — why do you leave us, Mr. Dunwoodie? — Henry must soon return.”

The gentleman caught one of her hands in his own, and the stern expression of his countenance gave place to a look of admiration, as he replied —

“You managed him famously, my dear little kinswoman; never — no, never, forget the land of your birth; remember, if you are the granddaughter of an Englishman, you are, also, the granddaughter of a Peyton.”

“Oh!” returned the laughing girl, “it would be difficult to forget that, with the constant lectures on genealogy before us, with which we are favored by Aunt Jeanette; but why do you go?”

“I am on the wing for Virginia, and have much to do.” He pressed her hand as he spoke, and looking back, while in the act of closing the door, exclaimed, “Be true to your country — be American.”

Between the open sarcasm of Frances, and the ill-concealed disdain of the young man, Colonel Wellmere had felt himself placed in an awkward predicament; but ashamed to resent such trifles in the presence of his mistress, he satisfied himself with observing superciliously, as Dunwoodie left the room —

“Quite a liberty for a youth in his situation; a shopboy with a bundle, I fancy.”

The idea of picturing the graceful Peyton Dunwoodie as a shopboy could never enter the mind of Sarah, and she looked around her in surprise, when the colonel continued —

“This Mr. Dun — Dun — ”

“Dunwoodie! Oh, no — he is a relation of my aunt,” cried the young lady, “and an intimate friend of my brother; they were at school together, and only separated in England, when one went into the army, and the other to a French military academy.”

"His money appears to have been thrown away," observed the colonel, betraying the spleen he was unsuccessfully striving to conceal.

"We ought to hope so," added Sarah, with a smile; "for it is said he intends joining the rebel army. He was brought in here in a French ship, and has just been exchanged; you may soon meet him in arms."

"Well, let him—I wish Washington plenty of such heroes"; and he turned to a more pleasant subject by changing the discourse to themselves.

A few weeks after this scene occurred, the army of Burgoyne laid down their arms. Mr. Wharton, beginning to think the result of the contest doubtful, resolved to conciliate his countrymen, and gratify himself, by calling his daughters into his own abode. Miss Peyton consented to be their companion; and from that time, until the period at which we commenced our narrative, they had formed one family.

Whenever the main army made any movements, Captain Wharton had, of course, accompanied it; and once or twice, under the protection of strong parties, acting in the neighborhood of The Locusts, he had enjoyed rapid and stolen interviews with his friends. A twelvemonth had, however, passed without his seeing them; and the impatient Henry had adopted the disguise we have mentioned, and unfortunately arrived on the very evening that an unknown and rather suspicious guest was an inmate of the house, which seldom contained any other than its regular inhabitants.

"But do you think he suspects me?" asked the captain, with anxiety, after pausing to listen to Cæsar's opinion of the Skinners.

"How should he," cried Sarah, "when your sisters and father could not penetrate your disguise?"

"There is something mysterious in his manner; his looks are too prying for an indifferent observer," continued young

Wharton, thoughtfully, "and his face seems familiar to me. The recent fate of André has created much irritation on both sides. Sir Henry threatens retaliation for his death; and Washington is as firm as if half the world were at his command. The rebels would think me a fit subject for their plans just now, should I be so unlucky as to fall into their hands."

"But, my son," cried his father, in great alarm, "you are not a spy; you are not within the rebel — that is, the American lines; there is nothing here to spy."

"That might be disputed," rejoined the young man, musing; "their pickets were as low as the White Plains when I passed through. It is true my purposes are innocent; but how is it to appear? My visit to you would seem a cloak to other designs. Remember, sir, the treatment you received not a year ago, for sending me a supply of fruit for the winter."

"That proceeded from the misrepresentations of my kind neighbors," said Mr. Wharton, "who hoped, by getting my estate confiscated, to purchase good farms, at low prices. Peyton Dunwoodie, however, soon obtained our discharge; we were detained but a month."

"We!" repeated the son, in amazement; "did they take my sisters, also? — Fanny, you wrote me nothing of this."

"I believe," said Frances, coloring highly, "I mentioned the kind treatment we received from your old friend, Major Dunwoodie; and that he procured my father's release."

"True; — but were you with him in the rebel camp?"

"Yes," said the father, kindly; "Fanny would not suffer me to go alone. Jeanette and Sarah took charge of The Locusts, and this little girl was my companion in captivity."

"And Fanny returned from such a scene. Greater rebel than ever," cried Sarah, indignantly; "one would think the hardships her father suffered would have cured her of such whims."

"What say you to the charge, my pretty sister?" cried the captain, gayly; — "did Peyton strive to make you hate your king more than he does himself?"

"Peyton Dunwoodie hates no one," said Frances, quickly; then, blushing at her own ardor, she added immediately, "he loves you, Henry, I know; for he has told me so again and again."

Young Wharton tapped his sister on the cheek, with a smile, as he asked her, in an affected whisper — "Did he tell you also that he loved my little sister Fanny?"

"Nonsense," said Frances; and the remnants of the supper table soon disappeared under her superintendence.

CHAPTER III

AS THE inmates of The Locusts assembled, on the following morning, around their early breakfast, the driving rain was seen to strike in nearly horizontal lines against the windows of the building, and forbade the idea of exposing either man or beast to the tempest. Harper was the last to appear; after taking a view of the state of the weather, he apologized to Mr. Wharton for the necessity that existed for his trespassing on his goodness for a longer time. To appearances, the reply was as courteous as the excuse; yet Harper wore a resignation in his deportment that was widely different from the uneasy manner of the father. Henry Wharton had resumed his disguise with a reluctance amounting to disgust, but in obedience to the commands of his parent. No communications passed between him and the stranger, after the first salutations of the morning had been paid by Harper to him, in common with the rest of the family. Frances had, indeed, thought there was something like a smile passing over the features of the traveler, when, on entering the room, he first confronted her brother; but it was confined to the eyes, seeming to want power to affect the muscles of the face, and was soon lost in the settled and benevolent expression which reigned in his countenance with a sway but seldom interrupted. While they were yet seated at the table, Cæsar entered, and, laying a small parcel in silence by the side of his master, modestly retired behind his chair, where, placing one hand on its back, he continued in an attitude half familiar, half respectful.

"What is this, Cæsar?" inquired Mr. Wharton, turning the bundle over to examine its envelope, and eying it rather suspiciously.

"The 'baccy, sir; Harvey Birch, he got home, and he bring you a little good 'baccy from York."

"Harvey Birch!" rejoined the master, with great deliberation, stealing a look at his guest. "I do not remember desiring him to purchase any tobacco for me; but as he has brought it, he must be paid for his trouble."

For an instant only, as the negro spoke, did Harper suspend his silent meal; his eye moved slowly from the servant to the master, and again all remained in its impenetrable reserve.

To Sarah Wharton this intelligence gave unexpected pleasure; rising from her seat, with impatience, she bade the black show Birch into the apartment; when, suddenly recollecting herself, she turned to the traveler with an apologizing look, and added, "if Mr. Harper will excuse the presence of a peddler."

In the deep recesses of the windows of the cottage were seats of paneled work; and the rich damask curtains, that had ornamented the parlor in Queen Street, had been transferred to The Locusts, and gave to the room that indescribable air of comfort which so gratefully announces the approach of a domestic winter. Into one of these recesses Captain Wharton now threw himself, drawing the curtain before him in such a manner as to conceal most of his person from observation; while his younger sister, losing her natural frankness of manner in an air of artificial constraint, silently took possession of the other.

Harvey Birch had been a peddler from his youth; at least so he frequently asserted, and his skill in the occupation went far to prove the truth of the declaration. He was a native of one of the eastern colonies; and, from something of superior intelligence which belonged to his father, it was thought they had known better fortunes in the land of their nativity. Harvey possessed, however, the common manners of the country, and was in no way distinguished from men

of his class but by his acuteness, and the mystery which enveloped his movements. Ten years before, they had arrived together in the vale, and, purchasing the humble dwelling at which Harper had made his unsuccessful application, continued ever since peaceful inhabitants, but little noticed and but little known. Until age and infirmities had prevented, the father devoted himself to the cultivation of the small spot of ground belonging to his purchase, while the son pursued with avidity his humble barter. Their orderly quietude had soon given them so much consideration in the neighborhood as to induce a maiden of five-and-thirty to forget the punctilio of her sex, and to accept the office of presiding over their domestic comforts. The roses had long before vanished from the cheeks of Katy Haynes, and she had seen in succession both her male and female acquaintances forming the union so desirable to her sex, with but little or no hope left for herself, when, with views of her own, she entered the family of the Birches. Necessity is a hard master, and, for the want of a better companion, the father and son were induced to accept her services; but still Katy was not wanting in some qualities which made her a very tolerable housekeeper. On the one hand, she was neat, industrious, honest, and a good manager. On the other, she was talkative, selfish, superstitious, and inquisitive. From the private conversations of the parent and child, she learned that a fire had reduced them from competence to poverty, and at the same time diminished the number of their family to two. There was a tremulousness in the voice of the father, as he touched lightly on the event, which affected even the heart of Katy; but no barrier is sufficient to repel vulgar curiosity. She persevered, until a very direct intimation from Harvey, by threatening to supply her place with a female a few years younger than herself, gave her awful warning that there were bounds beyond which she was not to pass. There

was, however, one piece of intelligence, and that of no little interest to herself, which she had succeeded in obtaining; and from the moment of its acquisition, she directed her energies to the accomplishment of one object, aided by the double stimulus of love and avarice.

Harvey was in the frequent habit of paying mysterious visits, in the depth of the night, to the fireplace of the apartment that served for both kitchen and parlor. Here he was observed by Katy; and, availing herself of his absence, and the occupations of the father, by removing one of the hearthstones, she discovered an iron pot, glittering with a metal that seldom fails to soften the hardest heart. Katy succeeded in replacing the stone without discovery, and never dared to trust herself with another visit. From that moment, however, the heart of the virgin lost its obduracy; and nothing interposed between Harvey and his happiness but his own want of observation.

The war did not interfere with the traffic of the peddler, who seized on the golden opportunity which the interruption of the regular trade afforded, and appeared absorbed in the one grand object of amassing money. For a year or two his employment was uninterrupted, and his success proportionate; but, at length, dark and threatening hints began to throw suspicion around his movements, and the civil authorities thought it incumbent on them to examine narrowly into his mode of life. His imprisonments, though frequent, were not long; and his escapes from the guardians of the law easy, compared to what he endured from the persecution of the military. Still Birch survived, and still he continued his trade, though compelled to be very guarded in his movements, especially whenever he approached the northern boundaries of the county; or, in other words, the neighborhood of the American lines. His visits to The Locusts had become less frequent, and his appearance at his own abode so seldom as to draw forth from the

disappointed Katy, in the fullness of her heart, the complaint we have related, in her reply to Harper. Nothing, however, seemed to interfere with the pursuits of this indefatigable trader, who had now braved the fury of the tempest, and ventured to cross the half mile between his own residence and the house of Mr. Wharton.

In a few minutes after receiving the commands of his young mistress, Cæsar reappeared, ushering into the apartment the subject of the foregoing digression. In person, the peddler was a man above the middle height, spare, but full of bone and muscle. At first sight, his strength seemed unequal to manage the unwieldy burden of his pack; yet he threw it on and off with great dexterity, and with as much apparent ease as if it had been filled with feathers. His eyes were gray, sunken, restless, and, for the flitting moments that they dwelt on the countenances of those with whom he conversed, they seemed to read the very soul. They possessed, however, two distinct expressions, which, in a great measure, characterized the whole man. When engaged in traffic, the intelligence of his face appeared lively, active, and flexible, though uncommonly acute; if the conversation turned on the ordinary transactions of life, his air became abstracted and restless; but if, by chance, the Revolution and the country were the topic, his whole system seemed altered — all his faculties were concentrated; he would listen for a great length of time, without speaking, and then would break silence by some light and jocular remark that was too much at variance with his former manner not to be affectation. But of the war, and of his father, he seldom spoke, and always from some very obvious necessity.

On entering the room, the peddler relieved himself from his burden, and saluted the family with modest civility. To Harper he made a silent bow, without lifting his eyes from the carpet; but the curtain prevented any notice of

the presence of Captain Wharton. Sarah gave but little time for the usual salutations before she commenced her survey of the contents of the pack; and, for several minutes, the two were engaged in bringing to light the various articles it contained. The tables, chairs, and floor were soon covered with silks, crapes, gloves, muslins, and all the stock of an itinerant trader. Cæsar was employed to hold open the mouth of the pack, as its hoards were discharged, and occasionally he aided his young lady by directing her admiration to some article of finery, which, from its deeper contrast in colors, he thought more worthy of her notice. At length, Sarah, having selected several articles, and satisfactorily arranged the prices, observed in a cheerful voice —

“But, Harvey, you have told us no news. Has Lord Cornwallis beaten the rebels again?”

The question could not have been heard; for the peddler, burying his body in the pack, brought forth a quantity of lace of exquisite fineness, and, holding it up to view, he required the admiration of the young lady. Miss Peyton dropped the cup she was engaged in washing, from her hand; and Frances exhibited the whole of that lovely face, which had hitherto only suffered one of its joyous eyes to be seen, beaming with a color that shamed the damask which enviously concealed her figure.

The aunt quitted her employment; and Birch soon disposed of a large portion of this valuable article. The praises of the ladies had drawn the whole person of the younger sister into view; and Frances was slowly rising from the window, as Sarah repeated her question with an exultation in her voice that proceeded more from pleasure in her purchase than her political feelings. The younger sister resumed her seat, apparently examining the state of the clouds, while the peddler, finding a reply was expected, answered slowly —

"There is some talk, below, about Tarleton having defeated General Sumter, on the Tiger River."

Captain Wharton now involuntarily thrust his head between the opening of the curtains into the room; and Frances, turning her ear in breathless silence, noticed the quiet eyes of Harper looking at the peddler, over the book he was affecting to read, with an expression that denoted him to be a listener of no ordinary interest.

"Indeed!" cried the exulting Sarah; "Sumter—Sumter—who is he? I'll not buy even a pin, until you tell me all the news," she continued, laughing, and throwing down a muslin she had been examining.

For a moment the peddler hesitated; his eye glanced towards Harper, who was yet gazing at him with settled meaning, and the whole manner of Birch was altered.

"He lives somewhere among the niggers to the South," answered the peddler, abruptly.

"No more nigger than be yourself, Mister Birch," interrupted Cæsar, tartly, dropping, at the same time, the covering of the goods in high displeasure.

"Hush, Cæsar—hush; never mind it now," said Sarah Wharton, soothingly, impatient to hear further.

"A black man so good as white, Miss Sally," continued the offended negro, "so long as he behave heself."

"And frequently he is much better," rejoined his mistress; "but, Harvey, who is this Mr. Sumter?"

A slight indication of humor showed itself on the face of the peddler, but it disappeared, and he continued as if the discourse had met with no interruption from the sensitiveness of the domestic.

"As I was saying, he lives among the colored people in the South"—Cæsar resumed his occupation—"and he has lately had a scrimmage with this Colonel Tarleton—"

"Who defeated him of course," cried Sarah, with confidence.



"So say the troops at Morrisania."

"But what do *you* say?" Mr. Wharton ventured to inquire, yet speaking in a low tone.

"I repeat but what I hear," said Birch, offering a piece of cloth to the inspection of Sarah, who rejected it in silence, evidently determined to hear more before she made another purchase.

"They say, however, at the Plains," the peddler continued, first throwing his eyes again round the room, and letting them rest for an instant on Harper, "that Sumter and one or two more were all that were hurt, and that the rig'lars were all cut to pieces, for the militia were fixed snugly in a log barn."

"Not very probable," said Sarah, contemptuously, "though I make no doubt the rebels got behind the logs."

"I think," said the peddler, coolly, again offering the silk, "it's quite ingenious to get a log between one and a gun instead of getting between a gun and a log."

The eyes of Harper dropped quietly on the pages of the volume in his hand, while Frances, rising, came forward with a smile in her face, as she inquired, in a tone of affability that the peddler had never before witnessed from the younger sister —

"Have you more of the lace, Mr. Birch?"

The desired article was immediately produced, and Frances became a purchaser also.

"So it is thought that Colonel Tarleton has worsted General Sumter?" said Mr. Wharton, affecting to be employed in mending the cup that was broken by the eagerness of his sister-in-law.

"I believe they think so at Morrisania," said Birch, dryly.

"Have you any other news, friend?" asked Captain Wharton, venturing to thrust his face without the curtains again.

"Have you heard that Major André has been hanged?"

Captain Wharton started, and for a moment glances of great significance were exchanged between him and the trader, when he observed, with affected indifference, "That must have been some weeks ago."

"Does his execution make much noise?" asked the father, striving to make the broken china unite.

"People will talk, you know, 'squire."

"Is there any probability of movements below, my friend, that will make traveling dangerous?" asked Harper, looking steadily at the other, in expectation of his reply.

Some bunches of ribbons fell from the hands of Birch; his countenance changed instantly, losing its keen expression in intent meaning, as he answered slowly, "It is some time since the rig'lar cavalry were out, and I saw some of De Lancey's men cleaning their arms, as I passed their quarters; it would be no wonder if they took the scent soon, for the Virginia horse are low in the county."

"Are they in much force?" asked Mr. Wharton, suspending all employment in anxiety.

"I did not count them."

Frances was the only observer of the change in the manner of Birch, and, on turning to Harper, he had resumed his book in silence. She took some of the ribbons in her hand — laid them down again — and, bending over the goods, so that her hair, falling in rich curls, shaded her face, she observed, blushing with a color that suffused her neck —

"I thought the Southern horse had marched towards the Delaware."

"It may be so," said Birch; "I passed the troops at a distance."

Cæsar had now selected a piece of calico, in which the gaudy colors of yellow and red were contrasted on a white ground, and, after admiring it for several minutes, he laid it down with a sigh, as he exclaimed, "Berry pretty calico."

"That," said Sarah — "yes, that would make a proper gown for your wife, Cæsar."

"Yes, Miss Sally," cried the delighted black, "it make old Dinah heart leap for joy — so berry genteel."

"Yes," added the peddler, quaintly, "that is only wanting to make Dinah look like a rainbow."

Cæsar eyed his young mistress eagerly, until she inquired of Harvey the price of the article.

"Why, much as I light of chaps," said the peddler.

"How much?" demanded Sarah in surprise.

"According to my luck in finding purchasers; for my friend Dinah, you may have it at four shillings."

"It is too much," said Sarah, turning to some goods for herself.

"Monstrous price for coarse calico, Mister Birch," grumbled Cæsar, dropping the opening of the pack again.

"We will say three, then," added the peddler, "if you like that better."

"Be sure he like 'em better," said Cæsar, smiling good-humoredly, and reopening the pack; "Miss Sally like a t'ree shilling when she give, and a four shilling when she take."

The bargain was immediately concluded; but in measuring, the cloth wanted a little of the well-known ten yards required by the dimensions of Dinah. By dint of a strong arm, however, it grew to the desired length, under the experienced eye of the peddler, who conscientiously added a ribbon of corresponding brilliancy with the calico; and Cæsar hastily withdrew to communicate the joyful intelligence to his aged partner.

During the movements created by the conclusion of the purchase, Captain Wharton had ventured to draw aside the curtain, so as to admit a view of his person, and he now inquired of the peddler, who had begun to collect the scattered goods, at what time he had left the city.

"At early twilight," was the answer.

"So lately!" cried the other in surprise; and then correcting his manner by assuming a more guarded air, he continued, "Could you pass the pickets at so late an hour?"

"I did," was the laconic reply.

"You must be well known by this time, Harvey, to the officers of the British army," cried Sarah, smiling knowingly on the peddler.

"I know some of them by sight," said Birch, glancing his eyes round the apartment, taking in their course Captain Wharton, and resting for an instant on the countenance of Harper.

Mr. Wharton had listened intently to each speaker in succession, and had so far lost the affectation of indifference as to be crushing in his hand the pieces of china on which he had expended so much labor in endeavoring to mend it; when, observing the peddler tying the last knot in his pack, he asked abruptly —

"Are we about to be disturbed again with the enemy?"

"Who do you call the enemy?" said the peddler, raising himself erect, and giving the other a look before which the eyes of Mr. Wharton sank in instant confusion.

"All are enemies who disturb our peace," said Miss Peyton, observing that her brother was unable to speak. "But are the royal troops out from below?"

"'Tis quite likely they soon may be," returned Birch, raising his pack from the floor, and preparing to leave the room.

"And the continentals," continued Miss Peyton, mildly, "are the continentals in the county?"

Harvey was about to utter something in reply, when the door opened, and Cæsar, attended by his delighted spouse, paid his tribute of gratitude in words. Sarah received them with great complacency, and made a few compliments to the

taste of the husband, and the probable appearance of the wife. Frances, with a face beaming with a look of pleasure that corresponded to the smiling countenances of the blacks, offered the service of her needle in fitting the admired calico to its future uses. The offer was humbly and gratefully accepted.

As Cæsar followed his wife and the peddler from the apartment, and was in the act of closing the door, he indulged himself in a grateful soliloquy by saying aloud —

“ Good little lady — Miss Fanny — take care of old fader — love to make a gown for old Dinah, too.” What else his feelings might have induced him to utter is unknown, but the sound of his voice was heard some time after the distance rendered his words indistinct.

Harper, who had dropped his book, sat an admiring witness of the scene; and Frances enjoyed a double satisfaction, as she received an approving smile from a face which concealed, under the traces of deep thought and engrossing care, the benevolent expression which characterizes all the best feelings of the human heart.

CHAPTER IV

THE party sat in silence for many minutes after the peddler had withdrawn. Mr. Wharton had heard enough to increase his uneasiness, without in the least removing his apprehensions on behalf of his son. The captain was impatiently wishing Harper in any other place than the one he occupied with such apparent composure, while Miss Peyton completed the disposal of her breakfast equipage, with the mild complacency of her nature, aided a little by an inward satisfaction at possessing so large a portion of the trader's lace; Sarah was busily occupied in arranging her purchases, and Frances was kindly assisting in the occupation, disregarding her own neglected bargains, when the stranger suddenly broke the silence by saying —

"If any apprehensions of me induce Captain Wharton to maintain his disguise, I wish him to be undeceived; had I motives for betraying him, they could not operate under present circumstances."

The younger sister sank into her seat colorless and astonished. Miss Peyton dropped the tea-tray she was lifting from the table, and Sarah sat with her purchases unheeded in her lap, in speechless surprise. Mr. Wharton was stupefied; but the captain, hesitating a moment from astonishment, sprang into the middle of the room, and exclaimed, as he tore off the instruments of his disguise —

"I believe you from my soul, and this tiresome imposition shall continue no longer. Yet I am at a loss to conceive in what manner you should know me."

"You really look so much better in your proper person, Captain Wharton," said Harper, with a slight smile, "I

would advise you never to conceal it in future. There, is enough to betray you, if other sources of detection were wanting"; as he spoke, he pointed to a picture suspended over the mantelpiece, which exhibited the British officer in his regimentals.

"I had flattered myself," cried young Wharton, with a laugh, "that I looked better on the canvas than in a masquerade. You must be a close observer, sir."

"Necessity has made me one," said Harper, rising from his seat.

Frances met him as he was about to withdraw, and, taking his hand between both her own, said with earnestness, her cheeks mantling with their richest vermilion, "You cannot—you will not betray my brother."

For an instant Harper paused in silent admiration of the lovely pleader, and then, folding her hands on his breast, he replied solemnly, "I cannot, and I will not"; he released her hands, and laying his own on her head gently, continued, "If the blessing of a stranger can profit you, receive it." He turned, and, bowing low, retired, with a delicacy that was duly appreciated by those he quitted, to his own apartment.

Young Wharton, released from the uneasiness of his disguise, began at last to enjoy a visit which had been undertaken at so much personal risk. Harper appeared only at the dinner table, and then retired under the pretense of some engagements in his own room. Notwithstanding the confidence created by his manner, the family felt his absence a relief; for the visit of Captain Wharton was necessarily to be confined to a very few days, both from the limitation of his leave of absence, and the danger of a discovery.

All dread of consequences, however, was lost in the pleasure of the meeting. Once or twice during the day, Mr. Wharton had suggested a doubt as to the character of his unknown guest, and the possibility of the detection of his son proceeding in some manner from his information; but

the idea was earnestly opposed by all his children ; even Sarah uniting with her brother and sister in pleading warmly in favor of the sincerity expressed in the outward appearance of the traveler.

On the afternoon of the succeeding day, the party were assembled in the parlor around the tea-table of Miss Peyton, when a change in the weather occurred. The thin *scud*, that apparently floated but a short distance above the tops of the hills, began to drive from the west towards the east in astonishing rapidity. The rain yet continued to beat against the eastern windows of the house with fury ; in that direction the heavens were dark and gloomy. Frances was gazing at the scene with the desire of youth to escape from the tedium of confinement, when, as if by magic, all was still. The rushing winds had ceased, the pelting of the storm was over, and, springing to the window, with delight pictured in her face, she saw a glorious ray of sunshine lighting the opposite wood. In an instant the piazza, which opened to the south, was thronged with the inmates of the cottage. The air was mild, balmy, and refreshing ; in the east, clouds, which might be likened to the retreating masses of a discomfited army, hung around the horizon in awful and increasing darkness. At a little elevation above the cottage, the thin vapor was still rushing towards the east with amazing velocity ; while in the west the sun had broken forth and shed his parting radiance on the scene below.

"What a magnificent scene !" said Harper, in a low tone ; "how grand ! how awfully sublime !—may such a quiet speedily await the struggle in which my country is engaged, and such a glorious evening follow the day of her adversity !"

Frances, who stood next to him, alone heard the voice. Turning in amazement from the view to the speaker, she saw him standing bareheaded, erect, and with his eyes lifted to heaven. There was no longer the quiet which

had seemed their characteristic, but they were lighted into something like enthusiasm, and a slight flush passed over his features.

"There can be no danger apprehended from such a man," thought Frances; "such feelings belong only to the virtuous."

The musings of the party were now interrupted by the sudden appearance of the peddler. He had taken advantage of the first gleam of sunshine to hasten to the cottage. Heedless of wet or dry as it lay in his path, with arms swinging to and fro, and with his head bent forward of his body several inches, Harvey Birch approached the piazza, with a gait peculiarly his own; it was the quick, lengthened pace of an itinerant vender of goods.

"Fine evening," said the peddler, saluting the party, without raising his eyes; "quite warm and agreeable for the season."

Mr. Wharton assented to the remark, and inquired kindly after the health of his father. Harvey heard him, and continued standing for some time in moody silence; but the question being repeated, he answered with a slight tremor in his voice —

"He fails fast; old age and hardships will do their work." The peddler turned his face from the view of most of the family; but Frances noticed his glistening eyes and quivering lip, and, for the second time, Harvey rose in her estimation.

The valley in which the residence of Mr. Wharton stood ran in a direction from northwest to southeast, and the house was placed on the side of a hill which terminated its length in the former direction. A small opening, occasioned by the receding of the opposite hill, and the fall of the land to the level of the tidewater, afforded a view of the Sound over the tops of the distant woods on its margin. Some dark spots were now to be distinguished, occasionally rising into view, and again sinking behind the lengthened waves which

interposed themselves to the sight. They were unnoticed by all but the peddler. He had seated himself on the piazza, at a distance from Harper, and appeared to have forgotten the object of his visit. His roving eye, however, soon caught a glimpse of these new objects in the view, and he sprang up with alacrity, gazing intently towards the water. He changed his place, glanced his eye with marked uneasiness on Harper, and then said with great emphasis —

"The rig'lars must be out from below."

"Why do you think so?" inquired Captain Wharton, eagerly. "God send it may be true; I want their escort in again."

"Them ten whaleboats would not move so fast unless they were better manned than common."

"Perhaps," cried Mr. Wharton, in alarm, "they are — they are continentals returning from the island."

"They look like rig'lars," said the peddler, with meaning.

"Look!" repeated the captain, "there is nothing but spots to be seen."

Harvey disregarded his observation, but seemed to be soliloquizing, as he said in an undertone, "They came out before the gale — have laid on the island these two days — horse are on the road — there will soon be fighting near us." During this speech Birch several times glanced his eye towards Harper, with evident uneasiness, but no corresponding emotion betrayed any interest of that gentleman in the scene. He stood in silent contemplation of the view, and seemed enjoying the change in the air. As Birch concluded, however, Harper turned to his host, and mentioned that his business would not admit of unnecessary delay; he would, therefore, avail himself of the fine evening to ride a few miles on his journey. Mr. Wharton made many professions of regret at losing so agreeable an inmate; but was too mindful of his duty not to speed the parting guest, and orders were instantly given to that effect.

The uneasiness of the peddler increased in a manner for which nothing apparent could account; his eye was constantly wandering towards the lower end of the vale, as if in expectation of some interruption from that quarter. At length Cæsar appeared, leading the noble beast which was to bear the weight of the traveler. The peddler officiously assisted to tighten the girths, and fasten the blue cloak and valise to the mail-straps.

Every preparation being completed, Harper proceeded to take his leave. To Sarah and her aunt he paid his compliments with ease and kindness; but when he came to Frances, he paused a moment, while his face assumed an expression of more than ordinary benignity. His eye repeated the blessing which had before fallen from his lips, and the girl felt her cheeks glow, and her heart beat, with a quicker pulsation, as he spoke his adieus. There was a mutual exchange of polite courtesy between the host and his parting guest; but as Harper frankly offered his hand to Captain Wharton, he remarked, in a manner of great solemnity—

"The step you have undertaken is one of much danger, and disagreeable consequences to yourself may result from it; in such a case, I may have it in my power to prove the gratitude I owe your family for its kindness."

"Surely, sir," cried the father, losing sight of delicacy in apprehension for his child, "you will keep secret the discovery which your being in my house has enabled you to make."

Harper turned quickly to the speaker, and then, losing the sternness which had begun to gather on his countenance, he answered mildly, "I have learned nothing in your family, sir, of which I was ignorant before; but your son is safer from my knowledge of his visit than he would be without it."

He bowed to the whole party, and without taking any notice of the peddler, other than by simply thanking him for his attentions, mounted his horse, and, riding steadily and

gracefully through the little gate, was soon lost behind the hill which sheltered the valley to the northward.

The eyes of the peddler followed the retiring figure of the horseman so long as it continued within view, and as it disappeared from his sight, he drew a long and heavy sigh, as if relieved from a load of apprehension.

"Captain Wharton," he asked abruptly, "do you go in to-night?"

"No," said the captain, laconically.

"I rather guess," said the peddler, coolly, "now the storm is over, the Skinners may be moving; you had better shorten your visit, Captain Wharton."

"Oh!" cried the British officer, "a few guineas will buy off those rascals at any time, should I meet them. No, no, Mr. Birch, here I stay until morning."

"Money could not liberate Major André," said the peddler, dryly.

Both the sisters now turned to the captain in alarm, and the elder observed —

"You had better take the advice of Harvey; rest assured, brother, his opinion in such matters ought not to be disregarded."

"Yes," added the younger, "if, as I suspect, Mr. Birch assisted you to come here, your safety, our happiness, dear Henry, requires you to listen to him now."

"I brought myself out, and can take myself in," said the captain, positively; "our bargain went no further than to procure my disguise, and to let me know when the coast was clear; and in the latter particular, you were mistaken, Mr. Birch."

"I was," said the peddler, with some interest, "and the greater is the reason why you should get back to-night; the pass I gave you will serve but once."

"Cannot you forge another?"

The pale cheek of the trader showed an unusual color,

but he continued silent, with his eyes fixed on the ground, until the young man added, with great positiveness—"Here I stay this night, come what will."

"Captain Wharton," said the peddler, with great deliberation and marked emphasis, "beware a tall Virginian, with huge whiskers; he is below you to my knowledge; the devil can't deceive him; I never could but once."

"Let him beware of me," said Wharton, haughtily; "but, Mr. Birch, I exonerate you from further responsibility."

"Will you give me that in writing?" asked the cautious Birch.

"Oh, cheerfully!" cried the captain, with a laugh; "Cæsar! pen, ink, and paper, while I write a discharge for my trusty attendant, Harvey Birch, peddler, etc. etc."

The implements for writing were produced, and the captain, with great gayety, wrote the desired acknowledgment in language of his own; which the peddler took, and carefully depositing it by the side of the images of his Catholic Majesty, made a sweeping bow to the whole family, and departed as he had approached. He was soon seen at a distance, stealing into the door of his own humble dwelling.

The father and sisters of the captain were too much rejoiced in retaining the young man to express, or even entertain, the apprehensions his situation might reasonably excite; but on retiring to their evening repast, a cooler reflection induced the captain to think of changing his mind. Unwilling to trust himself out of the protection of his father's domains, the young man dispatched Cæsar to desire another interview with Harvey. The black soon returned with the unwelcome intelligence that it was now too late. Katy had told him that Harvey must be miles on his road to the northward, "having left home at early candlelight with his pack." Nothing now remained to the captain but patience, until the morning should afford further opportunity of deciding on the best course for him to pursue.

"This Harvey Birch, with his knowing looks and portentous warnings, gives me more uneasiness than I am willing to own," said Captain Wharton, rousing himself from a fit of musing, in which the danger of his situation made no small part of his meditations.

"How is it that he is able to travel to and fro in these difficult times, without molestation?" inquired Miss Peyton.

"Why the rebels suffer him to escape so easily is more than I can answer," returned the other; "but Sir Henry would not permit a hair of his head to be injured."

"Indeed!" cried Frances, with interest; "is he then known to Sir Henry Clinton?"

"At least he ought to be."

"Do you think, my son," asked Mr. Wharton, "there is no danger of his betraying you?"

"Why — no; I reflected on that before I trusted myself to his power," said the captain, thoughtfully; "he seems to be faithful in matters of business. The danger to himself, should he return to the city, would prevent such an act of villainy."

"I think," said Frances, adopting the manner of her brother, "Harvey Birch is not without good feelings; at least, he has the appearance of them at times."

"Oh!" cried Sarah, exulting, "he has loyalty, and that with me is a cardinal virtue."

"I am afraid," said her brother, laughing, "love of money is a stronger passion than love of his king."

"Then," said the father, "you cannot be safe while in his power — for no love will withstand the temptation of money, when offered to avarice."

"Surely, sir," cried the youth, recovering his gayety, "there must be one love that can resist anything — is there not, Fanny?"

"Here is your candle," said the distressed maiden; "you keep your father up beyond his usual hour."

CHAPTER V

ALL the members of the Wharton family laid their heads on their pillows that night with a foreboding of some interruption to their ordinary quiet. Uneasiness kept the sisters from enjoying their usual repose, and they rose from their beds on the following morning, unrefreshed, and almost without having closed their eyes.

The family were early in assembling around the breakfast table; and Miss Peyton, with a little of that minute precision which creeps into the habits of single life, had pleasantly insisted that the absence of her nephew should in no manner interfere with the regular hours she had established; consequently, the party were already seated when the captain made his appearance. Suddenly Cæsar, who had participated largely in the anxiety of the family, and who had risen with the dawn, and kept a vigilant watch on the surrounding objects as he stood gazing from one of the windows, exclaimed with a face that approached to something like the hues of a white man —

“Run — Massa Harry — run — if he love old Cæsar, run — here come a rebel horse!”

“Run!” repeated the British officer, gathering himself up in military pride; “no, Mr. Cæsar, running is not my trade.” While speaking, he walked deliberately to the window, where the family were already collected in the greatest consternation.

At the distance of more than a mile, about fifty dragoons were to be seen, winding down one of the lateral entrances of the valley. In advance with an officer was a man attired in the dress of a countryman, who pointed in the direction

of the cottage. A small party now left the main body, and moved rapidly towards the object of their destination.

On reaching the road which led through the bottom of the valley, they turned their horses' heads to the north. The Whartons continued chained in breathless silence to the spot, watching their movements, when the party, having reached the dwelling of Birch, made a rapid circle around his grounds, and in an instant his house was surrounded by a dozen sentinels.

Two or three of the dragoons now dismounted and disappeared; in a few minutes, however, they returned to the yard, followed by Katy, from whose violent gesticulations it was evident that matters of no trifling concern were on the carpet. A short communication with the loquacious housekeeper followed the arrival of the main body of the troop, and the advanced party remounting, the whole moved towards The Locusts with great speed.

As yet none of the family had sufficient presence of mind to devise any means of security for Captain Wharton; but the danger now became too pressing to admit of longer delay, and various means of secreting him were hastily proposed; but they were all haughtily rejected by the young man, as unworthy of his character. It was too late to retreat to the woods in the rear of the cottage, for he would unavoidably be seen, and, followed by a troop of horse, as inevitably taken.

At length, his sisters, with trembling hands, replaced his original disguise, the instruments of which had been carefully kept at hand by Cæsar in expectation of some sudden emergency.

This arrangement was hastily and imperfectly completed, as the dragoons entered the lawn and orchard of The Locusts, riding with the rapidity of the wind; and in their turn the Whartons were surrounded.

Nothing remained now but to meet the impending examination with as much indifference as the family could assume. The leader of the horse dismounted, and, followed

by a couple of his men, approached the outer door of the building, which was slowly and reluctantly opened for his admission by Cæsar. The heavy tread of the trooper, as he followed the black to the door of the parlor, rang in the ears of the females as it approached nearer and nearer, and drove the blood from their faces to their hearts with a chill that nearly annihilated feeling.

A man, whose colossal stature manifested the possession of vast strength, entered the room and, removing his cap, saluted the family with a mildness his appearance did not indicate as belonging to his nature. Still, the expression of his eye, though piercing, was not bad, and his voice, though deep and powerful, was far from unpleasant. Frances ventured to throw a timid glance at his figure as he entered, and saw at once the man from whose scrutiny, Harvey Birch had warned them, there was so much to be apprehended.

"You have no cause for alarm, ladies," said the officer, pausing a moment, and contemplating the pale faces around him — "my business will be confined to a few questions, which, if freely answered, will instantly remove us from your dwelling."

"And what may they be, sir?" stammered Mr. Wharton, rising from his chair, and waiting anxiously for the reply.

"Has there been a strange gentleman staying with you during the storm?" continued the dragoon, speaking with interest, and in some degree sharing in the evident anxiety of the father.

"This gentleman — here — favored us with his company during the rain, and has not yet departed."

"This gentleman!" repeated the other, turning to Captain Wharton, and contemplating his figure for a moment, until the anxiety of his countenance gave place to a lurking smile. He approached the youth with an air of comic gravity and, with a low bow, continued, "I am sorry for the severe cold you have in your head, sir."

"I?" exclaimed the captain, in surprise; "I have no cold in my head."

"I fancied it, then, from seeing you had covered such handsome black locks with that ugly old wig; it was my mistake; you will please to pardon it."

Mr. Wharton groaned aloud; but the ladies, ignorant of the extent of their visitor's knowledge, remained in trembling yet rigid silence. The captain himself moved his hand involuntarily to his head, and discovered that the trepidation of his sisters had left some of his natural hair exposed. The dragoon watched the movement with a continued smile, when, seeming to recollect himself, turning to the father, he proceeded —

"Then, sir, I am to understand there has not been a Mr. Harper here within the week."

"Mr. Harper," echoed the other, feeling a load removed from his heart, "yes, — I had forgotten; but he is gone; and if there be anything wrong in his character, we are in entire ignorance of it; to me he was a total stranger."

"You have but little to apprehend from his character," answered the dragoon, dryly; "but he is gone — how — when — and whither?"

"He departed as he arrived," said Mr. Wharton, gathering renewed confidence from the manner of the trooper, "on horseback, last evening, and he took the northern road."

The officer listened to him with intense interest, his countenance gradually lighting into a smile of pleasure; and the instant Mr. Wharton concluded his laconic reply, he turned on his heel and left the apartment. The Whartons, judging from his manner, thought he was about to proceed in quest of the object of his inquiries. They observed the dragoon, on gaining the lawn, in earnest and apparently pleased conversation with his two subalterns. In a few moments orders were given to some of the troop, and horsemen left the valley, at full speed, by its various roads.

The suspense of the party within, who were all highly interested witnesses of this scene, was shortly terminated; for the heavy tread of the dragoon soon announced his second approach. He bowed again politely as he reëntered the room and, walking up to Captain Wharton, said, with comic gravity —

"Now, sir, my principal business being done, may I beg to examine the quality of that wig?"

The British officer imitated the manner of the other, as he deliberately uncovered his head, and, handing him the wig, observed, "I hope, sir, it is to your liking."

"I cannot, without violating the truth, say it is," returned the dragoon; "I prefer your ebony hair, from which you seem to have combed the powder with great industry. But that must have been a sad hurt you have received under this enormous black patch."

"You appear so close an observer of things, I should like your opinion of it, sir," said Henry, removing the silk, and exhibiting the cheek free from blemish.

"Upon my word, you improve most rapidly in externals," added the trooper, preserving his muscles in inflexible gravity; "if I could but persuade you to exchange this old surtout for that handsome blue coat by your side, I think I never could witness a more agreeable metamorphosis since I was changed myself from a lieutenant to a captain."

Young Wharton very composedly did as was required, and stood an extremely handsome, well-dressed young man. The dragoon looked at him for a minute with the drollery that characterized his manner, and then continued —

"This is a newcomer in the scene; it is usual, you know, for strangers to be introduced; I am Captain Lawton, of the Virginia horse."

"And I, sir, am Captain Wharton, of his Majesty's 60th regiment of foot," returned Henry, bowing stiffly, and recovering his natural manner.

The countenance of Lawton changed instantly, and his assumed quaintness vanished. He viewed the figure of Captain Wharton, as he stood proudly swelling with a pride that disdained further concealment, and exclaimed, with great earnestness —

“Captain Wharton, from my soul I pity you!”

“Oh! then,” cried the father, in agony, “if you pity him, dear sir, why molest him? he is not a spy; nothing but a desire to see his friends prompted him to venture so far from the regular army in disguise. Leave him with us; there is no reward, no sum, which I will not cheerfully pay.”

“Sir, your anxiety for your friend excuses your language,” said Lawton, haughtily; “but you forget I am a Virginian, and a gentleman.” Turning to the young man, he continued, “Were you ignorant, Captain Wharton, that our pickets have been below you for several days?”

“I did not know it until I reached them, and it was then too late to retreat,” said Wharton, sullenly. “I came out, as my father has mentioned, to see my friends, understanding your parties to be at Peekskill, and near the Highlands, or surely I would not have ventured.”

“All this may be very true; but the affair of André has made us on the alert. When treason reaches the grade of general officers, Captain Wharton, it behooves the friends of liberty to be vigilant.”

Henry bowed to this remark in distant silence, but Sarah ventured to urge something in behalf of her brother. The dragoon heard her politely, and apparently with commiseration; but willing to avoid useless and embarrassing petitions, he answered mildly —

“I am not the commander of the party, madam; Major Dunwoodie will decide what must be done with your brother; at all events, he will receive nothing but kind and gentle treatment.”



"Dunwoodie!" exclaimed Frances, with a face in which the roses contended for the mastery with the paleness of apprehension; "thank God! then Henry is safe!"

Lawton regarded her with a mingled expression of pity and admiration; then shaking his head doubtingly, he continued—

"I hope so; and with your permission, we will leave the matter for his decision."

The color of Frances changed from the paleness of fear to the glow of hope. Her dread on behalf of her brother was certainly greatly diminished; yet her form shook, her breathing became short and irregular, and her whole frame gave tokens of extraordinary agitation. Her eyes rose from the floor to the dragoon, and were again fixed immovably on the carpet—she evidently wished to utter something, but was unequal to the effort. Miss Peyton was a close observer of these movements of her niece, and advancing with an air of feminine dignity, inquired—

"Then, sir, we may expect the pleasure of Major Dunwoodie's company shortly?"

"Immediately, madam," answered the dragoon, withdrawing his admiring gaze from the person of Frances; "expresses are already on the road to announce to him our situation, and the intelligence will speedily bring him to this valley; unless, indeed, some private reasons may exist to make a visit particularly unpleasant."

"We shall always be happy to see Major Dunwoodie."

"Oh! doubtless; he is a general favorite. May I presume on it so far as to ask leave to dismount and refresh my men, who compose a part of his squadron?"

The officers were invited to take their morning's repast at the family breakfast table, and having made their arrangements without, the invitation was frankly accepted. None of the watchfulness which was so necessary to their situation was neglected by the wary partisan. Patrols were seen on

the distant hills, taking their protecting circuit around their comrades, who were enjoying, in the midst of dangers, a security that can only spring from the watchfulness of discipline and the indifference of habit.

The addition to the party at Mr. Wharton's table was only three, and they were all of them men who, under the rough exterior induced by actual and arduous service, concealed the manners of gentlemen. Consequently, the interruption to the domestic privacy of the family was marked by the observance of strict decorum. The ladies left the table to their guests, who proceeded, without much superfluous diffidence, to do proper honors to the hospitality of Mr. Wharton.

At length Captain Lawton suspended for a moment his violent attacks on the buckwheat cakes, to inquire of the master of the house if there was not a peddler of the name of Birch who lived in the valley at times.

"At times only, I believe, sir," replied Mr. Wharton, cautiously; "he is seldom here; I may say I never see him."

"That is strange, too," said the trooper, looking at the disconcerted host intently, "considering he is your next neighbor; he must be quite domestic, sir; and to the ladies it must be somewhat inconvenient. I doubt not that that muslin in the window-seat cost twice as much as he would have asked them for it."

Mr. Wharton turned in consternation, and saw some of the recent purchases scattered about the room.

The two subalterns struggled to conceal their smiles; but the captain resumed his breakfast with an eagerness that created a doubt whether he ever expected to enjoy another. The necessity of a supply from the dominion of Dinah soon, however, afforded another respite, of which Lawton availed himself.

"I had a wish to break this Mr. Birch of his unsocial habits, and gave him a call this morning," he said; "had I

found him within, I should have placed him where he would enjoy life in the midst of society, for a short time at least."

"And where might that be, sir?" asked Mr. Wharton, conceiving it necessary to say something.

"The guardroom," said the trooper, dryly.

"What is the offense of poor Birch?" asked Miss Peyton, handing the dragoon a fourth dish of coffee.

"Poor!" cried the captain; "if he is poor, King George is a bad paymaster."

"Yes, indeed," said one of the subalterns, "his Majesty owes him a dukedom."

"And Congress a halter," continued the commanding officer, commencing anew on a fresh supply of the cakes.

"I am sorry," said Mr. Wharton, "that any neighbor of mine should incur the displeasure of our rulers."

"If I catch him," cried the dragoon, while buttering another cake, "he will dangle from the limbs of one of his namesakes."

"He would make no bad ornament, suspended from one of those locusts before his own door," added the lieutenant.

"Never mind," continued the captain; "I will have him yet before I'm a major."

As the language of these officers appeared to be sincere, and such as disappointed men in their rough occupations are but too apt to use, the Whartons thought it prudent to discontinue the subject. It was no new intelligence to any of the family that Harvey Birch was distrusted, and greatly harassed, by the American army. His escapes from their hands, no less than his imprisonments, had been the conversation of the country in too many instances, and under circumstances of too great mystery, to be easily forgotten. In fact, no small part of the bitterness expressed by Captain Lawton against the peddler arose from the unaccountable disappearance of the latter, when intrusted to the custody of two of his most faithful dragoons.

The party had halted at a farmhouse for the purposes of refreshment, and the prisoner was placed in a room by himself, but under the keeping of the two men before mentioned. All that was known subsequently is that a woman was seen busily engaged in the employments of the household near the sentinels. Afterwards neither woman nor peddler was to be found.

Captain Lawton never could forgive the deception; his antipathies to his enemies were not very moderate, but this was adding an insult to his penetration that rankled deeply. He sat in portentous silence, brooding over the exploit of his prisoner, yet mechanically pursuing the business before him, until, after sufficient time had passed to make a very comfortable meal, a trumpet suddenly broke on the ears of the party, sending its martial tones up the valley in startling melody. The trooper rose instantly from the table, exclaiming —

"Quick, gentlemen, to your horses; there comes Dunwoodie"; and, followed by his officers, he precipitately left the room.

CHAPTER VI

THE ladies of the Wharton family had collected about a window, deeply interested in the scene. Sarah viewed the approach of her countrymen with a smile of contemptuous indifference; for she even undervalued the personal appearance of men whom she thought arrayed in the unholy cause of rebellion. Miss Peyton looked on the gallant show with an exulting pride, which arose in the reflection that the warriors before her were the chosen troops of her native colony; while Frances gazed with an intensity of interest that absorbed all other considerations.

The two parties had not yet joined, before her quick eye distinguished one horseman in particular from those around him. To her it appeared that even the steed of this youthful soldier seemed to be conscious that he sustained the weight of no common man;—his hoofs but lightly touched the earth, and his airy tread was the curbed motion of a blooded charger.

The dragoon sat in the saddle with a firmness and ease that showed him master of himself and horse,—his figure uniting the just proportions of strength and activity, being tall, round, and muscular. To this officer Lawton made his report, and, side by side, they rode into the field opposite to the cottage.

The officer gave a few hasty orders to his second in command, walked rapidly into the lawn, and approached the cottage. Frances rose from her seat, and vanished from the apartment. The dragoon ascended the steps of the piazza, and had barely time to touch the outer door, when it opened to his admission.

The youth of Frances, when she left the city, had prevented her sacrificing, in conformity to the customs of that day, all her native beauties on the altar of fashion. Her hair, which was of a golden richness of color, was left, untortured, to fall in the natural ringlets of infancy, and it shaded a face which was glowing with the united charms of health, youth, and artlessness ; — her eyes spoke volumes, but her tongue was silent ; — her hands were interlocked before her, and, aided by her taper form, bending forward in an attitude of expectation, gave a loveliness and an interest to her appearance that for a moment chained her lover in silence to the spot.

Frances silently led the way into a vacant parlor, opposite to the one in which the family were assembled, and turning to the soldier frankly, placing both her hands in his, exclaimed —

"Ah, Dunwoodie ! how happy, on many accounts, I am to see you ! I have brought you in here to prepare you to meet an unexpected friend in the opposite room."

"To whatever cause it may be owing," cried the youth, pressing her hands to his lips, "I, too, am happy in being able to see you alone. Frances, the probation you have decreed is cruel ; war and distance may shortly separate us forever."

"We must submit to the necessity which governs us. But it is not love speeches I would hear now ; I have other and more important matter for your attention."

"What can be of more importance than to make you mine by a tie that will be indissoluble ! Frances, you are cold to me — me — from whose mind days of service and nights of alarm have never been able to banish your image for a single moment."

"Dear Dunwoodie," said Frances, softening nearly to tears, and again extending her hand to him, as the richness of her color gradually returned, "you know my sentiments —

this war once ended, and you may take that hand forever—but I can never consent to tie myself to you by any closer union than already exists, so long as you are arrayed in arms against my only brother. Even now, that brother is awaiting your decision to restore him to liberty, or to conduct him to a probable death.”

“Your brother!” cried Dunwoodie, starting and turning pale; “your brother! explain yourself—what dreadful meaning is concealed in your words?”

“Has not Captain Lawton told you of the arrest of Henry by himself this very morning?” continued Frances, in a voice barely audible, and fixing on her lover a look of the deepest concern.

“He told me of arresting a captain of the 60th in disguise, but without mentioning where or whom,” replied the major in a similar tone; and dropping his head between his hands, he endeavored to conceal his feelings from his companion.

“Dunwoodie! Dunwoodie!” exclaimed Frances, losing all her former confidence in the most fearful apprehensions, “what means this agitation?” As the major slowly raised his face, in which was pictured the most expressive concern, she continued, “Surely, surely, you will not betray your friend—my brother—your brother—to an ignominious death.”

“Frances!” exclaimed the young man in agony, “what can I do?”

“Do!” she repeated, gazing at him wildly; “would Major Dunwoodie yield his friend to his enemies—the brother of his betrothed wife?”

“Oh, speak not so unkindly to me, dearest Miss Wharton—my own Frances. I would this moment die for you—for Henry—but I cannot forget my duty—cannot forfeit my honor; you yourself would be the first to despise me if I did.”



"Peyton Dunwoodie!" said Frances, solemnly, and with a face of ashy paleness, "you have told me—you have sworn, that you loved me—"

"I do," interrupted the soldier, with fervor;—but motioning for silence, she continued, in a voice that trembled with her fears—

"Do you think I can throw myself into the arms of a man whose hands are stained with the blood of my only brother?"

"Frances! you wring my very heart"; then pausing, to struggle with his feelings, he endeavored to force a smile, as he added, "but, after all, we may be torturing ourselves with unnecessary fears, and Henry, when I know the circumstances, may be nothing more than a prisoner of war; in which case, I can liberate him on parole."

"Oh! there can be no just grounds to doubt it; I knew—I knew—Dunwoodie, you would never desert us in the hour of our greatest need!"

Frances now eagerly led the way into the opposite room to communicate to her family the pleasing intelligence which she already conceived as certain.

Dunwoodie followed her reluctantly, and with forebodings of the result; but a few moments brought him into the presence of his relatives, and he summoned all his resolution to meet the trial with firmness.

The salutations of the young men were cordial and frank, and, on the part of Henry Wharton, as collected as if nothing had occurred to disturb his self-possession.

The abhorrence of being, in any manner, auxiliary to the arrest of his friend; the danger to the life of Captain Wharton; and the heart-breaking declarations of Frances, had, however, created an uneasiness in the bosom of Major Dunwoodie, which all his efforts could not conceal. His reception by the rest of the family was kind and sincere, both from old regard and a remembrance of former obligations, heightened

by the anticipations they could not fail to read in the expressive eyes of the blushing girl by his side. After exchanging greetings with every member of the family, Major Dunwoodie beckoned to the sentinel, whom the wary prudence of Captain Lawton had left in charge of the prisoner, to leave the room. Turning to Captain Wharton, he inquired mildly —

"Tell me, Henry, the circumstances of this disguise, in which Captain Lawton reports you to have been found, and remember — remember — Captain Wharton — your answers are entirely voluntary."

"The disguise was used by me, Major Dunwoodie," replied the English officer, gravely, "to enable me to visit my friends, without incurring the danger of becoming a prisoner of war."

"But you did not wear it until you saw the troop of Lawton approaching?"

"Oh! no," interrupted Frances, eagerly, forgetting all the circumstances in her anxiety for her brother; "Sarah and myself placed them on him when the dragoons appeared; it was our awkwardness that led to the discovery."

The countenance of Dunwoodie brightened, as, turning his eyes in fondness on the speaker, he listened to her explanation.

"Probably some articles of your own," he continued, "which were at hand, and were used on the spur of the moment."

"No," said Wharton, with dignity; "the clothes were worn by me from the city; they were procured for the purpose to which they were applied, and I intended to use them in my return this very day."

The appalled Frances shrunk back from between her brother and lover, where her ardent feelings had carried her, as the whole truth glanced over her mind, and she sank into a seat, gazing wildly on the young men.

"But the pickets — the party at the Plains?" added Dunwoodie, turning pale.

"I passed them, too, in disguise. I made use of this pass, for which I paid; and, as it bears the name of Washington, I presume it is forged."

Dunwoodie caught the paper from his hand, eagerly, and stood gazing on the signature for some time in silence, during which the soldier gradually prevailed over the man; when he turned to the prisoner, with a searching look, as he asked —

"Captain Wharton, whence did you procure this paper?"

"That is a question, I conceive, Major Dunwoodie has no right to ask."

"Your pardon, sir; my feelings may have led me into an impropriety."

Mr. Wharton, who had been a deeply interested auditor, now so far conquered his feelings as to say, "Surely, Major Dunwoodie, the paper cannot be material; such artifices are used daily in war."

"This name is no counterfeit," said the dragoon, studying the characters, and speaking in a low voice; "is treason yet among us undiscovered? The confidence of Washington has been abused, for the fictitious name is in a different hand from the pass. Captain Wharton, my duty will not suffer me to grant you a parole; you must accompany me to the Highlands."

"I did not expect otherwise, Major Dunwoodie."

Dunwoodie turned slowly towards the sisters, when the figure of Frances once more arrested his gaze. She had risen from her seat, and stood again with her hands clasped before him in an attitude of petition; feeling himself unable to contend longer with his feelings, he made a hurried excuse for a temporary absence, and left the room. Frances followed him, and, obedient to the direction of her eye, the soldier reëntered the apartment in which had been their first interview.

"Major Dunwoodie," said Frances, in a voice barely audible, as she beckoned to him to be seated, "I have already

acknowledged to you my esteem ; even now, when you most painfully distress me, I wish not to conceal it. Believe me, Henry is innocent of everything but imprudence. Our country can sustain no wrong. I have promised, Dunwoodie, when peace shall be restored to our country, to become your wife ; give to my brother his liberty on parole, and I will this day go with you to the altar, follow you to the camp, and, in becoming a soldier's bride, learn to endure a soldier's privations."

Dunwoodie seized the hand which the blushing girl, in her ardor, had extended towards him, and pressed it for a moment to his bosom ; then rising from his seat, he paced the room in excessive agitation.

"Frances, say no more, I conjure you, unless you wish to break my heart."

"You then reject my offered hand ?" she said, rising with dignity, though her pale cheek and quivering lip plainly showed the conflicting passions within.

"Reject it ! Have I not sought it with entreaties — with tears ? Has it not been the goal of all my earthly wishes ? But to take it under such conditions would be to dishonor us both. Yet hope for better things. Henry must be acquitted ; perhaps not tried. No intercession of mine shall be wanting, you must well know ; and believe me, Frances, I am not without favor with Washington."

"That very paper, that abuse of his confidence, to which you alluded, will steel him to my brother's case. If threats or entreaties could move his stern sense of justice, would André have suffered ?" As Frances uttered these words, she fled from the room in despair.

Dunwoodie remained for a minute nearly stupefied ; and then he followed with a view to vindicate himself, and to relieve her apprehensions. On entering the hall that divided the two parlors, he was met by a small ragged boy, who looked one moment at his dress, and placing a piece of paper

in his hands, immediately vanished through the outer door of the building. The bewildered state of his mind, and the suddenness of the occurrence, gave the major barely time to observe the messenger to be a country lad, meanly attired, and that he held in his hand one of those toys which are to be bought in cities, and which he now apparently contemplated with the conscious pleasure of having fairly purchased, by the performance of the service required. The soldier turned his eyes to the subject of the note. It was written on a piece of torn and soiled paper, and in a hand barely legible ; but, after some little labor, he was able to make out as follows :

The rig'lars are at hand, horse and foot.

Dunwoodie started ; and, forgetting everything but the duties of a soldier, he precipitately left the house. While walking rapidly towards the troops, he noticed on a distant hill a vidette riding with speed ; several pistols were fired in quick succession ; and the next instant the trumpets of the corps rang in his ears with the enlivening strain of "To arms !" By the time he had reached the ground occupied by his squadron, the major saw that every man was in active motion. Lawton was already in the saddle, eyeing the opposite extremity of the valley with the eagerness of expectation, and crying to the musicians, in tones but little lower than their own —

"Sound away, my lads, and let these Englishmen know that the Virginia horse are between them and the end of their journey."

The videttes and patrols now came pouring in, each making in succession his hasty report to the commanding officer, who gave his orders coolly, and with a promptitude that made obedience certain. By the additions of the videttes and parties that had been out, and which now had all joined, the whole number of the horse was increased to nearly two hundred. There was also a small body of men, whose ordinary

duties were those of guides, but who, in cases of emergency, were embodied and did duty as foot soldiers ; these were dismounted, and proceeded, by the order of Dunwoodie, to level the few fences which might interfere with the intended movements of the cavalry. The neglect of husbandry, which had been occasioned by the war, left this task comparatively easy. Those long lines of heavy and durable walls, which now sweep through every part of the country, forty years ago were unknown. The slight and tottering fences of stone were then used more to clear the land for the purposes of cultivation than as permanent barriers, and required the constant attention of the husbandmen to preserve them against the fury of the tempests and the frosts of winter. Some few of them had been built with more care immediately around the dwelling of Mr. Wharton ; but those which had intersected the vale below were now generally a pile of ruins, over which the horses of the Virginians would bound with the fleetness of the wind. Occasionally a short line yet preserved its erect appearance ; but as none of these crossed the ground on which Dunwoodie intended to act, there remained only the slighter fences of rails to be thrown down. Their duty was hastily, but effectually, performed ; and the guides withdrew to the post assigned to them for the approaching fight.

Major Dunwoodie had received from his scouts all the intelligence concerning his foe which was necessary to enable him to make his arrangements. The bottom of the valley was an even plain, that fell with a slight inclination from the foot of the hills on either side to the level of a natural meadow that wound through the country on the banks of a small stream, by whose waters it was often inundated and fertilized. This brook was easily forded in any part of its course ; and the only impediment it offered to the movements of the horse was in a place where it changed its bed from the western to the eastern side of the valley, and where its banks were more steep and difficult

of access than common. Here the highway crossed it by a rough wooden bridge, as it did again at the distance of half a mile above The Locusts.

The hills on the eastern side of the valley were abrupt, and frequently obtruded themselves in rocky prominences into its bosom, lessening the width to half the usual dimensions. One of these projections was but a short distance in the rear of the squadron of dragoons, and Dunwoodie directed Captain Lawton to withdraw, with two troops, behind its cover. On the left of the ground on which Dunwoodie intended to meet his foe was a close wood, which skirted that side of the valley for the distance of a mile. Into this, then, the guides retired, and took their station near its edge in such a manner as would enable them to maintain a scattering, but effectual, fire on the advancing column of the enemy.

It cannot be supposed that all these preparations were made unheeded by the inmates of the cottage.

Captain Wharton had been left in the keeping of two dragoons; one of whom marched to and fro on the piazza with a measured tread, and the other had been directed to continue in the same apartment with his prisoner. The young man had witnessed all the movements of Dunwoodie with admiration mingled with fearful anticipations of the consequences to his friends. He particularly disliked the ambush of the detachment under Lawton, who could be distinctly seen from the windows of the cottage, cooling his impatience by pacing on foot the ground in front of his men. Henry Wharton threw several hasty and inquiring glances around to see if no means of liberation would offer, but invariably found the eyes of his sentinel fixed on him with the watchfulness of an Argus. He longed, with the ardor of youth, to join in the glorious fray, but was compelled to remain a dissatisfied spectator of a scene in which he would so cheerfully have been an actor.

In a field on the left of the cottage, and at a short distance in the rear of the troops, was a small group whose occupation seemed to differ from that of all around them. They were in number only three, being two men and a mulatto boy. The principal personage of this party was a man whose leanness made his really tall stature appear excessive. To this party Frances determined to send a note, directed to Dunwoodie. She wrote hastily, with a pencil, "Come to me, Peyton, if it be but for a moment"; and Cæsar emerged from the cellar kitchen, taking the precaution to go by the rear of the building, to avoid the sentinel on the piazza, who had very cavalierly ordered all the family to remain housed. The black delivered the note to the gentleman, with a request that it might be forwarded to Major Dunwoodie. It was the surgeon of the horse to whom Cæsar addressed himself; and the teeth of the African chattered as he saw displayed upon the ground the several instruments which were in preparation for the anticipated operations. The doctor deliberately raised his eyes from his book to order the boy to convey the note to his commanding officer, and then continued his occupation. Cæsar was slowly retiring, as the third personage, who by his dress might be an inferior assistant of the surgical department, coolly inquired if he would have a leg taken off? This question seemed to remind the black of the existence of those limbs; for he made such use of them as to reach the piazza at the same instant that Major Dunwoodie rode up at half speed. The brawny sentinel squared himself, and poised his sword with military precision as he stood on his post while his officer passed; but no sooner had the door closed than, turning to the negro, he said sharply —

"Harkee, blackey, if you quit the house again without my knowledge, I shall turn barber, and shave off one of those ebony ears with this razor."

Thus assailed in another member, Cæsar hastily retreated

into his kitchen, muttering something in which the words "Skinner" and "rebel rascal" formed a principal part of speech.

"Major Dunwoodie," said Frances to her lover as he entered, "I may have done you injustice; if I have appeared harsh —"

The emotions of the agitated girl prevailed, and she burst into tears.

"Frances," cried the soldier with warmth, "you are never harsh, never unjust, but when you doubt my love."

"Ah! Dunwoodie," added the sobbing girl, "you are about to risk your life in battle; remember that there is one heart whose happiness is built on your safety; brave I know you are; be prudent —"

"For your sake?" inquired the delighted youth.

"For my sake," replied Frances.

CHAPTER VII

THE rough face of the country, the frequency of covers, together with the great distance from their own country, and the facilities afforded them for rapid movements to the different points of the war by the undisputed command of the ocean, had united to deter the English from employing a heavy force in cavalry, in their early efforts to subdue the revolted colonies.

Only one regiment of regular horse was sent from the mother country during the struggle. But legions and independent corps were formed in different places as it best accorded with the views of the royal commanders, or suited the exigency of the times. Opposed to them were the hardiest spirits of America. The sufferings of the line of the American army were great beyond example; but possessing the power, and feeling themselves engaged in a cause which justified severity, the cavalry officers were vigilant in providing for their wants, and the horse were well mounted, well fed, and consequently eminently effective. Perhaps the world could not furnish more brave, enterprising, and resistless corps of light cavalry than a few that were in the continental service at the time of which we write.

Dunwoodie's men had often tried their prowess against the enemy, and they now sat panting to be led once more against foes whom they seldom charged in vain. Their wishes were soon to be gratified; for their commander had scarcely time to regain his seat in the saddle, before a body of the enemy came sweeping round the base of the hill, which intersected the view to the south. A few minutes enabled the major to distinguish their character. In one

troop he saw the green coats of the cowboys, and in the other the leathern helmets and wooden saddles of the yagers. Their numbers were about equal to the body under his immediate orders.

On reaching the open space near the cottage of Harvey Birch, the enemy halted and drew up his men in line, evidently making preparations for a charge. At this moment a column of foot appeared in the vale, and pressed forward to the bank of the brook we have already mentioned.

Major Dunwoodie was not less distinguished by coolness and judgment than, where occasion offered, by his dauntless intrepidity. He at once saw his advantage and determined to profit by it. The column he led began slowly to retire from the field, when the youthful German who commanded the enemy's horse, fearful of missing an easy conquest, gave the word to charge. Few troops were more hardy than the cowboys; they sprang eagerly forward in the pursuit, with a confidence created by the retiring foe and the column in their rear; the Hessians followed more slowly, but in better order. The trumpets of the Virginians now sounded long and lively; they were answered by a strain from the party in ambush that went to the hearts of their enemies. The column of Dunwoodie wheeled in perfect order, opened, and, as the word to charge was given, the troops of Lawton emerged from their cover with their leader.

The charge threatened too much for the enemy. They scattered in every direction, flying from the field as fast as their horses, the chosen beasts of Westchester, could carry them. Only a few were hurt; but such as did meet the arms of their avenging countrymen never survived the blow to tell who struck it. Many of them were literally ridden down, and Dunwoodie soon saw the field without an opposing foe.

Such a scene could not be expected to be acted so near them and the inmates of the cottage take no interest in the result. In truth, the feelings it excited pervaded every

bosom, from the kitchen to the parlor. Cæsar, after first using the precaution to place himself under the cover of an angle in the wall, for a screen against any roving bullet which might be traversing the air, became an amused spectator of the skirmish. The sentinel on the piazza was at the distance of but a few feet from him, and entered into the spirit of the chase with all the ardor of a tried bloodhound; he noticed the approach of the black and his judicious position with a smile of contempt, as he squared himself towards the enemy, offering his unprotected breast to any dangers which might come.

After considering the arrangement of Cæsar, for a moment, with ineffable disdain, the dragoon said, with great coolness —

"You seem very careful of that beautiful person of yours, Mr. Blueskin."

"A bullet hurt a colored man as much as a white," muttered the black, surlily, casting a glance of much satisfaction at his rampart.

"Suppose I make the experiment," returned the sentinel. As he spoke, he deliberately drew a pistol from his belt, and leveled it at the black. Cæsar's teeth chattered at the appearance of the dragoon, although he believed nothing serious was intended. At this moment the column of Dunwoodie began to retire, and the royal cavalry commenced their charge.

"There, Mister Light-Horseman," said Cæsar, eagerly, who believed the Americans were retiring in earnest; "why you rebels don't fight—see—see how King George's men make Major Dunwoodie run! Good gentleman, too, but he don't like to fight a rig'lar."

"Confound the regulars," cried the other, fiercely; "wait a minute, blackey, and you'll see Captain Jack Lawton come out from behind yonder hill and scatter these cow-boys like wild geese who've lost their leader."

Cæsar supposed the party under Lawton to have sought the shelter of the hill from motives similar to that which had induced him to place the wall between himself and the battleground; but the fact soon verified the trooper's prophecy, and the black witnessed with consternation the total rout of the royal horse.

The sentinel manifested his exultation at the success of his comrades with loud shouts, which soon brought his companion, who had been left in the more immediate charge of Henry Wharton, to the open window of the parlor.

"See, Tom, see," cried the delighted trooper, "how Captain Lawton makes that Hessian's leather cap fly; and now the major has killed the officer's horse—zounds, why didn't he kill the Dutchman, and save the horse?"

A few pistols were discharged at the flying cowboys, and a spent bullet broke a pane of glass within a few feet of Cæsar. Immediately the black sought the protection of the inside of the building, and ascended to the parlor.

At this moment two cowboys, who had been cut off from a retreat to their own party, rode furiously through the gate, with an intention of escaping to the open wood in the rear of the cottage. Finding two horses that had been left linked together, they were busily engaged in separating them, when the trooper on the piazza discharged his pistols and rushed, sword in hand, to the rescue.

The entrance of Cæsar into the parlor had induced the wary dragoon within to turn his attention more closely on his prisoner; but this new interruption drew him again to the window. He threw his body out of the building, and with dreadful imprecations endeavored, by his threats and appearance, to frighten the marauders from their prey. The moment was enticing. Three hundred of his comrades were within a mile of the cottage; unriden horses were running at large in every direction, and Henry Wharton seized the unconscious sentinel by his legs, and threw him headlong

into the lawn. Cæsar vanished from the room and drew a bolt of the outer door.

The fall of the soldier was not great, and recovering his feet, he turned his fury for a moment on his prisoner. To scale the window in the face of his enemy was, however, impossible, and on trial he found the main entrance barred.

His comrade now called loudly upon him for aid, and forgetful of everything else, the discomfited trooper rushed to his assistance. One horse was set free, but the other was already fastened to the saddle of a cowboy. Cæsar threw the outer door open, and pointing to the liberated horse, that was quietly biting the faded herbage of the lawn, he exclaimed —

“Run — now — run — Massa Harry, run !”

“Yes,” cried the youth as he vaulted into the saddle, “now, indeed, my honest fellow, is the time to run.”

The African watched him with anxiety as he gained the highway, saw him incline to the right, and riding furiously under the brow of some rocks, which on that side rose perpendicularly, disappear from view.

The delighted Cæsar closed the door, pushing bolt after bolt and turning the key until it would turn no more, soliloquizing the whole time on the happy escape of his young master.

When the fortune of the day was decided and the time arrived for the burial of the dead, two cowboys and a Virginian were found in the rear of The Locusts, to be included in the number.

Happily for Henry Wharton, his horse was of the best blood of Virginia, and carried him with the swiftness of the wind along the valley ; and the heart of the youth was already beating tumultuously with pleasure at his deliverance when a well-known voice reached his startled ear, crying aloud —

“Bravely done, captain ! Don’t spare the whip, and turn to your left before you cross the brook.”

Wharton turned his head in surprise and saw, sitting on the point of a jutting rock that commanded a bird's-eye view of the valley, his former guide, Harvey Birch. His pack, much diminished in size, lay at the feet of the peddler, who waved his hat to the youth, exultingly, as the latter flew by him. The English captain took the advice of this mysterious being, and finding a wood road which led to the highway that intersected the valley, turned down its direction and was soon opposite to his friends. The next minute he crossed the bridge and stopped his charger before his old acquaintance, Colonel Wellmere.

"Captain Wharton!" exclaimed the astonished commander of the English troops, "dressed in blue, and mounted on a rebel dragoon horse! are you from the clouds in this attire, and in such a style?"

"Thank God!" cried the youth, recovering his breath, "I am safe, and have escaped from the hands of my enemies; but five minutes since and I was a prisoner, and threatened with the gallows."

"The gallows, Captain Wharton! surely those traitors to the king would never dare to commit another murder in cold blood; is it not enough that they took the life of André? wherefore did they threaten you with a similar fate?"

"Under the pretense of a similar offense," said the captain, briefly explaining to the group of listeners the manner of his capture, the grounds for his personal apprehensions, and the method of his escape.

During the conversation, which was held at a small distance in advance of the British column, and in full view of the Americans, Dunwoodie had been collecting his scattered troops, securing his few prisoners, and retiring to the ground where he had been posted at the first appearance of his enemy. Satisfied with the success he had already obtained, and believing the English too wary to give him an opportunity of harassing them farther, he was about to



withdraw the guides and, leaving a strong party on the ground to watch the movement of the regulars, to fall back a few miles to a favorable place for taking up his quarters for the night. Captain Lawton was reluctantly listening to the reasoning of his commander, and had brought out his favorite glass to see if no opening could be found for an advantageous attack, when he suddenly exclaimed —

“How’s this? a blue coat among those scarlet gentry! As I hope to live to see old Virginia, it is my masquerading friend of the 60th, the handsome Captain Wharton, escaped from two of my best men!”

He had not done speaking when the survivor of these heroes joined his troop, bringing with him his own horse and those of the cowboys; he reported the death of his comrade, and the escape of his prisoner. As the deceased was the immediate sentinel over the person of young Wharton, and the other was not to be blamed for defending the horses, which were more particularly under his care, his captain heard him with uneasiness, but without anger.

This intelligence made an entire change in the views of Major Dunwoodie. He saw at once that his own reputation was involved in the escape of his prisoner. The order to recall the guides was countermanded, and he now joined his second in command, watching as eagerly as the impetuous Lawton himself for some opening to assail his foe to advantage.

But two hours before, and Dunwoodie had felt the chance which made Henry Wharton his captive as the severest blow he had ever sustained. Now he panted for an opportunity in which, by risking his own life, he might recapture his friend. All other considerations were lost in the goadings of a wounded spirit, and he might have soon emulated Lawton in hardihood, had not Wellmere and his troops at this moment crossed the brook into the open plain.

"There," cried the delighted captain, as he pointed out the movement with his finger, "there comes John Bull into the mousetrap, and with eyes wide open."

"Surely," said Dunwoodie, eagerly, "he will not display his column on that flat; Wharton must tell him of the ambush. But if he does —"

"We will not leave him a dozen sound skins in his battalion," interrupted the other, springing into his saddle.

The truth was soon apparent; for the English column, after advancing for a short distance on the level land, displayed with an accuracy that would have done them honor on a field day in their own Hyde Park.

"Prepare to mount — mount!" cried Dunwoodie; the last word being repeated by Lawton in a tone that rang in the ears of Cæsar, who stood at the open window of the cottage.

As the British line advanced slowly and in exact order, the guides opened a galling fire. It began to annoy that part of the royal troops which was nearest to them. Wellmere listened to the advice of the veteran who was next to him in rank, and ordered two companies to dislodge the American foot from their hiding place. The movement created a slight confusion, and Dunwoodie seized the opportunity to charge. No ground could be more favorable for the maneuvers of horse, and the attack of the Virginians was irresistible. It was aimed chiefly at the bank opposite to the wood, in order to clear the Americans from the fire of their friends who were concealed; and it was completely successful. Wellmere, who was on the left of his line, was overthrown by the impetuous fury of his assailants. Dunwoodie was in time to save him from the impending blow of one of his men, and raised him from the ground, had him placed on a horse, and delivered to the custody of his orderly. The officer who had suggested the attack upon the guides had been intrusted with its execution, but the menace was sufficient for these irregulars. In fact, their duty was

performed, and they retired along the skirt of the wood, with intent to regain their horses, which had been left under a guard at the upper end of the valley.

The left of the British line was outflanked by the Americans, who doubled in their rear, and thus made the rout in that quarter total. But the second in command, perceiving how the battle went, promptly wheeled his party, and threw in a heavy fire on the dragoons, as they passed him to the charge; with this party was Henry Wharton, who had volunteered to assist in dispersing the guides; a ball struck his bridle arm, and compelled him to change hands. As the dragoons dashed by them, rending the air with their shouts, and with trumpets sounding a lively strain, the charger ridden by the youth became ungovernable—he plunged, reared, and his rider being unable, with his wounded arm, to manage the impatient animal, Henry Wharton found himself, in less than a minute, unwillingly riding by the side of Captain Lawton. The dragoon comprehended at a glance the ludicrous situation of his new comrade, but had only time to cry aloud before they plunged into the English line—

“The horse knows the righteous cause better than his rider. Captain Wharton, you are welcome to the ranks of freedom.”

No time was lost, however, by Lawton, after the charge was completed, in securing his prisoner again; and, perceiving him to be hurt, he directed him to be conveyed to the rear.

In the meanwhile great numbers of the English, taking advantage of the smoke and confusion in the field, were enabled to get in the rear of the body of their countrymen, which still preserved its order in a line parallel to the wood, but which had been obliged to hold its fire from the fear of injuring friends as well as foes. The fugitives were directed to form a second line within the wood itself, and under cover of the trees. This arrangement was not yet completed, when

Captain Lawton called to a youth, who commanded the other troop left with that part of the force which remained on the ground, and proposed charging the unbroken line of the British. The proposal was as promptly accepted as it had been made, and the troops were arrayed for the purpose. The eagerness of their leader prevented the preparations necessary to insure success, and the horse, receiving a destructive fire as they advanced, were thrown into additional confusion. Both Lawton and his more juvenile comrade fell at this discharge. Fortunately for the credit of the Virginians, Major Dunwoodie reëntered the field at this critical instant; he saw his troops in disorder; at his feet lay weltering in blood George Singleton, a youth endeared to him by numberless virtues, and Lawton was unhorsed and stretched on the plain. The eye of the youthful warrior flashed fire. His presence and words acted like magic. The clamor of voices ceased; the line was formed promptly and with exactitude; the charge sounded; and, led on by their commander, the Virginians swept across the plain with an impetuosity that nothing could withstand, and the field was instantly cleared of the enemy; those who were not destroyed sought a shelter in the woods. Dunwoodie slowly withdrew from the fire of the English who were covered by the trees, and commenced the painful duty of collecting his dead and wounded.

The sergeant, charged with conducting Henry Wharton to a place where he might procure surgical aid, set about performing his duty with alacrity, in order to return as soon as possible to the scene of strife. They had not reached the middle of the plain before the captain noticed a man whose appearance and occupation forcibly arrested his attention. His head was bald and bare, but a well-powdered wig was to be seen, half concealed, in the pocket of his breeches. His coat was off, and his arms were naked to the elbow; blood had disfigured much of his dress, and his hands, and even face, bore this mark of his profession; in his mouth

was a cigar ; in his right hand some instruments of strange formation, and in his left the remnants of an apple, with which he occasionally relieved the duty of the before-mentioned cigar. At his elbow stood a man who, from the implements in his hand, and his bloody vestments, seemed an assistant.

"There, sir, is the doctor," said the attendant of Henry, very coolly ; "he will patch up your arm in the twinkling of an eye" ; and beckoning to the guides to approach, he whispered and pointed to his prisoner, and then galloped furiously towards his comrades.

Wharton advanced to the side of this strange figure, and observing himself to be unnoticed, was about to request his assistance, when the other broke silence in a soliloquy —

"Now, I know this man to have been killed by Captain Lawton, as well as if I had seen him strike the blow. How often have I strove to teach him the manner in which he can disable his adversary without destroying life ! It is cruel thus unnecessarily to cut off the human race, and, furthermore, such blows as these render professional assistance unnecessary ; it is in a measure treating the lights of science with disrespect."

"If, sir, your leisure will admit," said Henry Wharton, "I must beg your attention to a slight hurt."

"Ah !" cried the other, starting, and examining him from head to foot, "you are from the field below ; is there much business there, sir ?"

"Indeed," answered Henry, accepting the offer of the surgeon to assist in removing his coat, "'t is a stirring time, I can assure you."

"Stirring !" repeated the surgeon, busily employed with his dressings ; "you give me great pleasure, sir ; for so long as they can stir there must be life ; and while there is life, you know, there is hope ; but here my art is of no use. I did put in the brains of one patient, but I rather think the

man must have been dead before I saw him. It is a curious case, sir; I will take you to see it — only across the fence there, where you may perceive so many bodies together. Ah! the ball has glanced around the bone without shattering it; you are fortunate in falling into the hands of an old practitioner, or you might have lost this limb."

"Indeed!" said Henry, with a slight uneasiness; "I did not apprehend the injury to be so serious."

"Oh! the hurt is not bad, but you have such a pretty arm for an operation; the pleasure of the thing might have tempted a novice."

"The deuce!" cried the captain; "can there be any pleasure in mutilating a fellow creature?"

"Sir," said the surgeon, with gravity, "a scientific amputation is a very pretty operation, and doubtless might tempt a younger man, in the hurry of business, to overlook all the particulars of the case."

Further conversation was interrupted by the appearance of the dragoons, slowly marching towards their former halting place, and new applications from the slightly wounded soldiers, who now came riding in, making hasty demands on the skill of the doctor.

The guides took charge of Wharton, and, with a heavy heart, the young man retraced his steps to his father's cottage.

The English had lost in the several charges about one third of their foot, but the remainder were rallied in the wood; and Dunwoodie, perceiving them to be too strongly posted to assail, had left a strong party with Captain Lawton, with orders to watch their motions, and to seize every opportunity to harass them before they reëmbarked.

The British now retired through the woods to the heights, and, keeping the route along their summits, in places unassailable by cavalry, commenced a retreat to their boats.

CHAPTER VIII

THE ground where the charge on the foot had taken place was but a short mile from The Locusts, and, in the intervals of the musketry, the cries of the soldiers had even reached the ears of its inhabitants. After witnessing the escape of his son, Mr. Wharton had joined his sister and eldest daughter in their retreat, and the three continued fearfully waiting for news from the field. Frances soon added herself to the uneasy group, and Cæsar was directed to examine into the state of things without, and report on whose banners victory had alighted. The father now briefly related to his astonished children the circumstance and manner of their brother's escape. They were yet in the freshness of their surprise, when the door opened, and Captain Wharton, attended by a couple of the guides, and followed by the black, stood before them.

"Henry — my son, my son," cried the agitated parent, stretching out his arms, yet unable to rise from his seat; "what is it I see — are you again a captive, and in danger of your life?"

"The better fortune of these rebels has prevailed," said the youth, endeavoring to force a cheerful smile, and taking a hand of each of his distressed sisters. "I strove nobly for my liberty; but the perverse spirit of rebellion has even lighted on their horses. The steed I mounted carried me, greatly against my will, I acknowledge, into the very center of Dunwoodie's men."

"And you were again captured," continued the father, casting a fearful glance on the armed attendants who had entered the room.

"That, sir, you may safely say; this Mr. Lawton, who sees so far, had me in custody again immediately."

"Why you no hold 'em in, Massa Harry?" cried Cæsar, pettishly.

"That," said Wharton, smiling, "was a thing easier said than done, Mr. Cæsar, especially as these gentlemen" (glancing his eyes at the guides) "had seen proper to deprive me of the use of my better arm."

"Wounded!" exclaimed both sisters in a breath.

"A mere scratch, but disabling me at a most critical moment," continued the brother, kindly, and stretching out the injured limb to manifest the truth of his declaration.

Frances had stood supporting herself by the back of a chair, catching in breathless anxiety every syllable as it was uttered; her color changed rapidly; her limbs shook under her; until, with desperate resolution, she inquired—

"Is any officer hurt on—the—on either side?"

"Yes," answered the man, cavalierly, "these Southern youths are so full of mettle that it's seldom we fight but one or two gets knocked over; one of the wounded, who came up before the troops, told me that Captain Singleton was killed, and Major Dunwoodie—"

Frances heard no more, but fell lifeless in the chair behind her. The attention of her friends soon revived her, when the captain, turning to the man, said fearfully—

"Surely Major Dunwoodie is unhurt?"

"Never fear him," added the guide, disregarding the agitation of the family; "they say a man who is born to be hanged will never be drowned; if a bullet could kill the major, he would have been dead long ago. I was going to say that the major is in a sad taking because of the captain's being killed; but had I known how much store the lady set by him, I would n't have been so plain-spoken."

Frances now rose quickly from her seat, with cheeks glowing with confusion, and leaning on her aunt, was about

to retire when Dunwoodie himself appeared. The first emotion of the agitated girl was unalloyed happiness; in the next instant she shrank back appalled from the unusual expression that reigned in his countenance. The sternness of battle yet sat on his brow; his eye was fixed and severe, and he proceeded at once to his object.

"Mr. Wharton," he earnestly began, "in times like these, we need not stand on idle ceremony; one of my officers, I am afraid, is hurt mortally; and, presuming on your hospitality, I have brought him to your door."

"I am happy, sir, that you have done so," said Mr. Wharton, at once perceiving the importance of conciliating the American troops; "the necessitous are always welcome, and doubly so in being the friend of Major Dunwoodie."

"Sir, I thank you for myself, and in behalf of him who is unable to render you his thanks," returned the other, hastily; "if you please, we will have him conducted where the surgeon may see and report upon his case without delay." To this there could be no objection; and Frances felt a chill at her heart, as her lover withdrew without casting a solitary look on herself.

As the supporters of the nearly lifeless body of Dunwoodie's friend passed her, in their way to the apartment prepared for his reception, she caught a view of this seeming rival. Dunwoodie was by his side, and held his hand, giving frequent and stern injunctions to the men to proceed with care, and, in short, manifesting all the solicitude that the most tender friendship could, on such an occasion, inspire.

Captain Wharton voluntarily gave a pledge to his keepers not to attempt again escaping, and then proceeded to execute those duties, on behalf of his father, which were thought necessary in a host. On entering the passage for that purpose, he met the operator who had so dexterously dressed his arm, advancing to the room of the wounded officer.

"Ah!" cried the disciple of Esculapius, "I see you are

doing well ; but stop ; have you a pin ? No ! here, I have one ; you must keep the cold air from your hurt, or some of the youngsters will be at work at you yet."

"God forbid," muttered the captain, in an undertone, attentively adjusting the bandages ; when Dunwoodie appeared at the door, impatiently crying aloud —

"Hasten, Sitgreaves, hasten ; or George Singleton will die from loss of blood."

"Bless me — is it George — poor little George ?" exclaimed the surgeon, as he quickened his pace with evident concern, and hastened to the side of the bed.

The youthful sufferer turned his eyes on the man of science, and with a faint smile endeavored to stretch forth his hand. There was an appeal in the look and action that touched the heart of the operator. The surgeon removed his spectacles to wipe an unusual moisture from his eyes, and proceeded carefully to the discharge of his duty. He applied himself in earnest to his work. All this time Dunwoodie stood in feverish silence, holding one of the hands of the sufferer in both his own, watching the countenance of Doctor Sitgreaves. At length Singleton gave a slight groan, and the surgeon rose with alacrity, and said aloud —

"Ah ! there is some pleasure in following a bullet ; it may be said to meander through the human body, injuring nothing vital ; but as for Captain Lawton's men —"

"Speak," interrupted Dunwoodie ; "is there hope ? — can you find the ball ?"

"It's no difficult matter to find that which one has in his hand, Major Dunwoodie," replied the surgeon, coolly ; but seeing how impatient the major was, he continued, "Ah ! poor George, it is a narrow chance —" Here he was interrupted by a messenger requiring the presence of the commanding officer in the field. Dunwoodie pressed the hand of his friend, and beckoned the doctor to follow him as he withdrew.

"What think you?" he whispered, on reaching the passage; "will he live?"

"He will."

"Thank God!" cried the youth, hastening below.

Dunwoodie for a moment joined the family, who were now collecting in the ordinary parlor. His face was no longer wanting in smiles, and his salutations, though hasty, were cordial. He took no notice of the escape and recapture of Henry Wharton, but seemed to think the young man had continued where he had left him before the encounter. On the ground they had not met. The English officer withdrew in haughty silence to a window, leaving the major uninterrupted to make his communications.

The excitement produced by the events of the day in the youthful feelings of the sisters had been succeeded by a languor that kept them both silent, and Dunwoodie held his discourse with Miss Peyton.

"Is there any hope, my cousin, that your friend can survive his wound?" said the lady, advancing towards her kinsman, with a smile of benevolent regard.

"Everything, my dear madam, everything," answered the soldier, cheerfully. "Sitgreaves says he will live, and he has never deceived me. He requires care and nursing; all now depends on the attention he receives."

"Trust me, sir, he will want for nothing under this roof."

"Pardon me, dear madam; you are all that is benevolent, but Singleton requires a care which many men would feel to be irksome. It is at moments like these, and in sufferings like this, that the soldier most finds the want of female tenderness." As he spoke, he turned his eyes on Frances with an expression that again thrilled to the heart of his mistress; she rose from her seat with burning cheeks, and said —

"All the attention that can with propriety be given to a stranger will be cheerfully bestowed on your friend."

"Ah!" cried the major, shaking his head, "that cold word 'propriety' will kill him; he must be fostered, cherished, soothed."

"These are offices for a sister or a wife."

"A sister!" repeated the soldier, the blood rushing to his own face tumultuously; "a sister! he has a sister; and one that might be here with to-morrow's sun." He paused, mused in silence, glanced his eyes uneasily at Frances, and muttered in an undertone, "Singleton requires it, and it must be done."

The ladies had watched his varying countenance in some surprise, and Miss Peyton now observed that —

"If there were a sister of Captain Singleton near them, her presence would be gladly requested both by herself and nieces."

"It must be, madam; it cannot well be otherwise," replied Dunwoodie, with a hesitation that but ill agreed with his former declarations; "she shall be sent for express this very night." And then, as if willing to change the subject, he approached Captain Wharton, and continued mildly —

"Henry Wharton, to me honor is dearer than life; but to your hands I know it can safely be confided; remain here unwatched, until we leave the county, which will not be for some days."

The distance in the manner of the English officer vanished, and taking the offered hand of the other, he replied with warmth, "Your generous confidence, Peyton, will not be abused, even though the gibbet on which your Washington hung André be ready for my own execution."

"Henry, Henry Wharton," said Dunwoodie, reproachfully, "you little know the man who leads our armies, or you would have spared him that reproach; but duty calls me without. I leave you where I could wish to stay myself, and where you cannot be wholly unhappy."

In passing Frances, she received another of those smiling looks of affection she so much prized, and for a season the impression made by his appearance after the battle was forgotten.

Among the veterans that had been impelled by the times to abandon the quiet of age for the service of their country was Colonel Singleton. He was a native of Georgia, and had been for the earlier years of his life a soldier by profession. When the struggle for liberty commenced, he offered his services to his country, and from respect to his character they had been accepted. His years and health had, however, prevented his discharging the active duties of the field, and he had been kept in command of different posts of trust, where his country might receive the benefits of his vigilance and fidelity without inconvenience to himself. For the last year he had been intrusted with the passes into the Highlands, and was now quartered, with his daughter, but a short day's march above the valley where Dunwoodie had met the enemy. His only other child was the wounded officer we have mentioned. Thither, then, the major prepared to dispatch a messenger with the unhappy news of the captain's situation, and charged with such an invitation from the ladies as he did not doubt would speedily bring the sister to the couch of her brother.

This duty performed, though with an unwillingness that only could make his former anxiety more perplexing, Dunwoodie proceeded to the field where his troops had halted. The remnant of the English were already to be seen, over the tops of the trees, marching along the heights towards their boats, in compact order and with great watchfulness. The detachment of the dragoons under Lawton were a short distance on their flank, eagerly awaiting a favorable moment to strike a blow. In this manner both parties were soon lost to view.

A short distance above The Locusts was a small hamlet, where several roads intersected each other, and from which,

consequently, access to the surrounding country was easy. It was a favorite halting place of the horse, and frequently held by the light parties of the American army during their excursions below. Dunwoodie had been the first to discover its advantages, and as it was necessary for him to remain in the county until further orders from above, it cannot be supposed he overlooked them now. To this place the troops were directed to retire, carrying with them their wounded ; parties were already employed in the sad duty of interring the dead. In making these arrangements, a new object of embarrassment presented itself to our young soldier. In moving through the field, he was struck with the appearance of Colonel Wellmere, seated by himself, brooding over his misfortunes, uninterrupted by anything but the passing civilities of the American officers. His anxiety on behalf of Singleton had hitherto banished the recollection of his captive from the mind of Dunwoodie, and he now approached him with apologies for his neglect. The Englishman received his courtesies with coolness, and complained of being injured by what he affected to think was the accidental stumbling of his horse. Dunwoodie, who had seen one of his own men ride him down, and that with very little ceremony, slightly smiled, as he offered him surgical assistance. This could only be procured at the cottage, and thither they both proceeded.

"Colonel Wellmere!" cried young Wharton in astonishment as they entered, "has the fortune of war been thus cruel to you also?—but you are welcome to the house of my father, although I could wish the introduction to have taken place under more happy circumstances."

Mr. Wharton received this new guest with the guarded caution that distinguished his manner, and Dunwoodie left the room to seek the bedside of his friend. Everything here looked propitious, and he acquainted the surgeon that another patient waited his skill in the room below. The

sound of the word was enough to set the doctor in motion, and seizing his implements of office, he went in quest of this new applicant. It has already been intimated that Colonel Wellmere was an old acquaintance of the family. Sarah had been so long absent from the city, that she had in some measure been banished from the remembrance of the gentleman; but the recollections of Sarah were more vivid. The surprise of the meeting had in some measure overpowered her, and after receiving the salutations of the colonel, she had risen, in compliance with a signal from her observant aunt, to withdraw.

"Then, sir," observed Miss Peyton, after listening to the surgeon's account of his young patient, "we may be flattered with the expectation that he will recover."

"'Tis certain, madam," returned the doctor, endeavoring, out of respect to the ladies, to replace his wig; "'tis certain, with care and good nursing."

"In those he shall not be wanting," said the spinster, mildly. "Everything we have he can command, and Major Dunwoodie has dispatched an express for his sister."

"His sister!" echoed the practitioner, with a look of particular meaning; "if the major has sent for her, she will come."

"Her brother's danger would induce her, one would imagine."

"No doubt, madam," continued the doctor, laconically, bowing low, and giving room to the ladies to pass. The words and the manner were not lost on the younger sister, in whose presence the name of Dunwoodie was never mentioned unheeded.

"Sir," cried Dr. Sitgreaves, on entering the parlor, addressing himself to the only coat of scarlet in the room, "I am advised you are in want of my aid. God send 'tis not Captain Lawton with whom you came in contact, in which case I may be too late."

"There must be some mistake, sir," said Wellmere, haughtily; "it was a surgeon that Major Dunwoodie was to send me, and not an old woman."

"'Tis Dr. Sitgreaves," said Henry Wharton, quickly, though with difficulty suppressing a laugh; "the multitude of his engagements to-day has prevented his usual attention to his attire."

"Your pardon, sir," added Wellmere, very ungraciously proceeding to lay aside his coat and exhibit what he called a wounded arm.

"If, sir," said the surgeon, dryly, "the degrees of Edinburgh — walking your London hospitals — amputating some hundreds of limbs — operating on the human frame in every shape that is warranted by the lights of science, a clear conscience, and the commission of the Continental Congress, can make a surgeon, I am one."

"Your pardon, sir," repeated the colonel, stiffly. "Captain Wharton has accounted for my error."

"For which I thank Captain Wharton," said the surgeon, proceeding coolly to arrange his amputating instruments, with a formality that made the colonel's blood run cold. "Where are you hurt, sir? What! is it then this scratch in your shoulder? In what manner might you have received this wound, sir?"

"From the sword of a rebel dragoon," said the colonel, with emphasis.

"Never. Even the gentle George Singleton would not have breathed on you so harmlessly." He took a piece of sticking-plaster from his pocket and applied it to the part. "There, sir; that will answer your purpose, and I am certain it is all that is required of me."

"What do you take to be my purpose, then, sir?"

"To report yourself wounded in your dispatches," replied the doctor, with great steadiness; "and you may say that an old woman dressed your hurts — for if one did not, one easily might!"

"Very extraordinary language," muttered the Englishman.

Here Captain Wharton interfered; and by explaining the mistake of Colonel Wellmere to proceed from his irritated mind and pain of body, he in part succeeded in mollifying the insulted practitioner.

The horse, having taken their required refreshment, prepared to fall back to their intended position, and it became incumbent on Dunwoodie to arrange the disposal of his prisoners. Sitgreaves he determined to leave in the cottage of Mr. Wharton, in attendance on Captain Singleton. Henry came to him with a request that Colonel Wellmere might also be left behind, under his parole, until the troops marched higher into the country. To this the major cheerfully assented; and as all the rest of the prisoners were of the vulgar herd, they were speedily collected, and, under the care of a strong guard, ordered to the interior. The dragoons soon after marched; and the guides, separating in small parties, accompanied by patrols from the horse, spread themselves across the country in such a manner as to make a chain of sentinels from the waters of the Sound to those of the Hudson.

Dunwoodie had lingered in front of the cottage, after he paid his parting compliments, with an unwillingness to return, that he thought proceeded from his solicitude for his wounded friends. The heart which has not become callous soon sickens with the glory that has been purchased with a waste of human life. Peyton Dunwoodie, left to himself, and no longer excited by the visions which youthful ardor had kept before him throughout the day, began to feel there were other ties than those which bound the soldier within the rigid rules of honor. While turning his last lingering gaze on The Locusts, he remembered only that it contained all that he most valued. The last lagging trooper of the corps had already disappeared behind the northern hill, and the major unwillingly turned his horse in the same direction.

CHAPTER IX

THE gathering mists of the evening had begun to darken the valley, as the detachment of Lawton made its reappearance, at its southern extremity. The march of the troops was slow, and their line extended, for the benefit of ease. In the front rode the captain, side by side with his senior subaltern, apparently engaged in close conference, while the rear was brought up by a young cornet, humming an air, and thinking of the sweets of a straw bed after the fatigues of a hard day's duty.

"Then it struck you too?" said the captain. "The instant I placed my eyes on her, I remembered the face; it is one not easily forgotten. By my faith, Tom, the girl does no discredit to the major's taste."

"She would do honor to the corps," replied the lieutenant, with some warmth; "those blue eyes might easily win a man to gentler employments than this trade of ours. In sober truth, I can easily imagine such a girl might tempt even me to quit the broadsword and saddle, for a darning needle and pillion."

"Mutiny, sir, mutiny," cried the other, laughing; "what, you, Tom Mason, dare to rival the gay, admired, and withal rich, Major Dunwoodie in his love! You, a lieutenant of cavalry, with but one horse, and he none of the best! whose captain is as tough as a pepperidge log, and has as many lives as a cat. But, Tom, what will George's sister say to this fair-haired maiden, in yonder white building?"

"Two such angels are more than justly falls to the share of one man, unless he be a Turk or a Hindu," replied the lieutenant.

"Yes, yes," said the captain, quickly, "the major is ever preaching morality to the youngsters, but he is a sly fellow in the main. Do you observe how fond he is of the cross-roads above this valley? Now, if I were to halt the troops twice in the same place, you would all swear there was a (petticoat in the wind.)"

"You are well known to the corps."

"Well, Tom, a slanderous propensity is incurable — but," stretching forward his body in the direction he was gazing, as if to aid him in distinguishing objects through the darkness, "what animal is moving through the field on our right?"

"'Tis a man," said Maçon, looking intently at the suspicious object.

"By his hump 'tis a dromedary!" added the captain, eying it keenly. Wheeling his horse suddenly from the highway, he exclaimed, "Harvey Birch! — take him, dead or alive!"

Mason and a few of the leading dragoons only understood the sudden cry, but it was heard throughout the line. A dozen of the men, with the lieutenant at their head, followed the impetuous Lawton, and their speed threatened the pursued with a sudden termination of the race.

Birch prudently kept his position on the rock, where he had been seen by the passing glance of Henry Wharton, until evening had begun to shroud the surrounding objects in darkness. From this height he had seen all the events of the day as they occurred. He had watched, with a beating heart, the departure of the troops under Dunwoodie, and with difficulty had curbed his impatience until the obscurity of night should render his moving free from danger. He had not, however, completed a fourth of his way to his own residence, when his quick ear distinguished the tread of the approaching horse. Trusting to the increasing darkness, he determined to persevere. By crouching and moving quickly along the surface of the ground, he hoped yet to escape unseen. Captain Lawton was too much engrossed to suffer his

eyes to indulge in their usual wandering ; and the peddler, perceiving by the voices that the enemy he most feared had passed, yielded to his impatience, and stood erect, in order to make greater progress. The moment his body arose above the shadow of the ground, it was seen, and the chase commenced. For a single instant Birch was helpless, his blood curdling in his veins at the imminence of the danger, and his legs refusing their natural and necessary office. But it was only for a moment. Casting his pack where he stood, and instinctively tightening the belt he wore, the peddler betook himself to flight. He knew that by bringing himself in a line with his pursuers and the wood, his form would be lost to sight. This he soon effected, and he was straining every nerve to gain the wood itself, when several horsemen rode by him but a short distance on his left, and cut him off from this place of refuge. The peddler threw himself on the ground as they came near him, and was passed unseen. But delay, now, became too dangerous for him to remain in that position. He accordingly arose, and still keeping in the shadow of the wood, along the skirts of which he heard voices crying to each other to be watchful, he ran with incredible speed in a parallel line, but in an opposite direction, to the march of the dragoons.

The confusion of the chase had been heard by the whole of the men, though none distinctly understood the order of Lawton but those who followed. The remainder were lost in doubt as to the duty that was required of them ; and the aforesaid cornet was making eager inquiries of the trooper near him on the subject, when a man, at a short distance in his rear, crossed the road at a single bound. At the same instant, the stentorian voice of Lawton rang through the valley, shouting —

“ Harvey Birch — take him, dead or alive ! ”

Fifty pistols lighted the scene, and the bullets whistled in every direction round the head of the devoted peddler.

A feeling of despair seized his heart, and in the bitterness of that moment he exclaimed —

“Hunted like a beast of the forest!”

He felt life and its accompaniments to be a burden, and was about to yield himself to his enemies. Nature, however, prevailed. If taken, there was great reason to apprehend that he would not be honored with the forms of a trial, but that most probably the morning sun would witness his ignominious execution; for he had already been condemned to death, and had only escaped that fate by stratagem. These considerations, with the approaching footsteps of his pursuers, roused him to new exertions. He again fled before them. A fragment of a wall, that had withstood the ravages made by war in the adjoining fences of wood, fortunately crossed his path. He hardly had time to throw his exhausted limbs over this barrier, before twenty of his enemies reached its opposite side. Their horses refused to take the leap in the dark, and amid the confusion of the rearing chargers, and the execrations of their riders, Birch was enabled to gain a sight of the base of the hill, on whose summit was a place of perfect security. The heart of the peddler now beat high with hope, when the voice of Captain Lawton again rang in his ears, shouting to his men to make room. The order was obeyed, and the fearless trooper rode at the wall at the top of his horse's speed, plunged the rowels in his charger, and flew over the obstacle in safety. The triumphant hurrahs of the men and the thundering tread of the horse too plainly assured the peddler of the emergency of his danger. He was nearly exhausted, and his fate no longer seemed doubtful.

“Stop, or die!” was uttered above his head, and in fearful proximity to his ears.

Harvey stole a glance over his shoulder, and saw, within a bound of him, the man he most dreaded. By the light of the stars he beheld the uplifted arm and the threatening

saber. Fear, exhaustion, and despair seized his heart, and the intended victim fell at the feet of the dragoon. The horse of Lawton struck the prostrate peddler, and both steed and rider came violently to the earth.

As quick as thought, Birch was on his feet again, with the sword of the discomfited dragoon in his hand. Vengeance seems but too natural to human passions. There are few who have not felt the seductive pleasure of making our injuries recoil on their authors; and yet there are some who know how much sweeter it is to return good for evil.

All the wrongs of the peddler shone on his brain with a dazzling brightness. For a moment the demon within him prevailed, and Birch brandished the powerful weapon in the air; in the next, it fell harmless on the reviving but helpless trooper. The peddler vanished up the side of the friendly rock.

"Help Captain Lawton, there!" cried Mason, as he rode up, followed by a dozen of his men; "and some of you dismount with me, and search these rocks; the villain lies here concealed."

"Hold!" roared the discomfited captain, raising himself with difficulty on his feet; "if one of you dismount, he dies. Tom, my good fellow, you will help me to straddle Roanoke again."

The astonished subaltern complied in silence, while the wondering dragoons remained as fixed in their saddles as if they composed part of the animals they rode.

"You are much hurt, I fear," said Mason, with something of condolence in his manner, as they reëntered the highway, and biting off the end of a cigar for the want of a better quality of tobacco.

"Something so, I do believe," replied the captain, catching his breath, and speaking with difficulty; "I wish our bone-setter was at hand, to examine into the state of my ribs."

"Sitgreaves is left in attendance on Captain Singleton, at the house of Mr. Wharton."

"Then there I halt for the night, Tom. These rude times must abridge ceremony; besides, you may remember the old gentleman professed a kinsman's regard for the corps. I can never think of passing so good a friend without a halt."

"And I will lead the troop to the Four Corners; if we all halt there, we shall breed a famine in the land."

"Captain Lawton," said the orderly of his troop, riding to the side of his commanding officer, "we are now passing the house of the peddler spy; is it your pleasure that we burn it?"

"No!" roared the captain, in a voice that startled the disappointed sergeant; "are you an incendiary? would you burn a house in cold blood? let but a spark approach, and the hand that carries it will never light another."

"Zounds!" muttered the sleepy cornet in the rear, as he was nodding on his horse, "there is life in the captain, notwithstanding his tumble."

Lawton and Mason rode on in silence, the latter rumi-nating on the wonderful change produced in his commander by his fall, when they arrived opposite to the gate before the residence of Mr. Wharton. The troop continued its march; but the captain and his lieutenant dismounted, and, followed by the servant of the former, they proceeded slowly to the door of the cottage.

Colonel Wellmere had already sought a retreat in his own room; Mr. Wharton and his son were closeted by themselves; and the ladies were administering the refreshments of the tea-table to the surgeon of the dragoons, who had seen one of his patients in his bed, and the other happily enjoying the comforts of a sweet sleep.

"Bless me, what's that?" said Miss Peyton, turning pale at the report of the pistols fired at Birch.

"It sounds prodigiously like the concussion on the atmosphere made by the explosion of firearms," said the surgeon, sipping his tea with great indifference. "I should imagine it to be the troop of Captain Lawton returning, did I not know the captain never uses the pistol, and that he dreadfully abuses the saber."

The doctor continued haranguing on the probability and improbability of its being the returning troop, until a loud knock at the door gave new alarm to the ladies. Instinctively laying his hand on a small saw that had been his companion for the whole day, in the vain expectation of an amputation, the surgeon, coolly assuring the ladies that he would stand between them and danger, proceeded in person to answer the summons.

"Captain Lawton!" exclaimed the surgeon, as he beheld the trooper leaning on the arm of his subaltern, and with difficulty crossing the threshold.

"Ah! my dear bone-setter, is it you? You are here very fortunately to inspect my carcass; but do lay aside that rascally saw!"

A few words from Mason explained the nature and manner of his captain's hurts, and Miss Peyton cheerfully accorded the required accommodations. While the room intended for the trooper was getting ready, and the doctor was giving certain portentous orders, the captain was invited to rest himself in the parlor. On the table was a dish of more substantial food than ordinarily adorned the afternoon's repast, and it soon caught the attention of the dragoons. Miss Peyton, recollecting that they had probably made their only meal that day at her own table, kindly invited them to close it with another. The offer required no pressing, and in a few minutes the two were comfortably seated, and engaged in an employment that was only interrupted by an occasional wry face from the captain, who moved his body in evident pain. These interruptions,

however, interfered but little with the principal business in hand; and the captain had got happily through with this important duty, before the surgeon returned to announce all things ready for his accommodation, in the room above stairs.

"Eating!" cried the astonished physician; "Captain Lawton, do you wish to die?"

"I have no particular ambition that way," said the trooper, rising, and bowing good night to the ladies, "and, therefore, have been providing the materials necessary to preserve life."

The surgeon muttered his dissatisfaction, while he followed Mason and the captain from the apartment.

Every house in America had, at that day, what was emphatically called its best room, and this had been allotted, by the unseen influence of Sarah, to Colonel Wellmere. The down counterpane, which a clear frosty night would render extremely grateful over bruised limbs, decked the English officer's bed. A massive silver tankard, richly embossed with the Wharton arms, held the beverage he was to drink during the night; while beautiful vessels of china performed the same office for the two American captains. Sarah was certainly unconscious of the silent preference she had been giving to the English officer; and it is equally certain, that but for his hurts, bed, tankard, and everything but the beverage would have been matters of indifference to Captain Lawton, half of whose nights were spent in his clothes, and not a few of them in the saddle. After taking possession of a small but very comfortable room, Doctor Sitgreaves proceeded to inquire into the state of his injuries. He had begun to pass his hand over the body of his patient, when the latter cried impatiently —

"Sitgreaves, do me the favor to lay that rascally saw aside, or I shall have recourse to my saber in self-defense; the sight of it makes my blood cold."

"Captain Lawton, for a man who has so often exposed life and limb, you are unaccountably afraid of a very useful instrument."

"Heaven keep me from its use," said the trooper, with a shrug.

"You would not despise the lights of science, nor refuse surgical aid, because this saw might be necessary?"

"I would."

"You would!"

"Yes; you shall never joint me like a quarter of beef while I have life to defend myself," cried the resolute dragoon. "But I grow sleepy; are any of my ribs broken?"

"No."

"Any of my bones?"

"No."

"Tom, I'll thank you for that pitcher." As he ended his draft, he very deliberately turned his back on his companions, and good-naturedly cried, "Good night, Mason; good night, Galen." •

CHAPTER X

THE possessions of Mr. Wharton extended to some distance on each side of the house in which he dwelt, and most of his land was unoccupied. A few scattered dwellings were to be seen in different parts of his domains, but they were fast falling to decay, and were untenanted. The proximity of the country to the contending armies had nearly banished the pursuits of agriculture from the land. It was useless for the husbandman to devote his time, and the labor of his hands, to obtain overflowing garners that the first foraging party would empty. None tilled the earth with any other view than to provide the scanty means of subsistence, except those who were placed so near to one of the adverse parties as to be safe from the inroads of the light troops of the other. To these the war offered a golden harvest, more especially to such as enjoyed the benefits of an access to the royal army. Mr. Wharton did not require the use of his lands for the purposes of subsistence; and he willingly adopted the guarded practice of the day, limiting his attention to such articles as were soon to be consumed within his own walls, or could be easily secreted from the prying eyes of the foragers. In consequence, the ground on which the action was fought had not a single inhabited building, besides the one belonging to the father of Harvey Birch. This house stood between the place where the cavalry had met and that where the charge had been made on the party of Wellmere.

To Katy Haynes it had been a day fruitful of incidents. The prudent housekeeper had kept her political feelings in a state of rigid neutrality; her own friends had espoused

the cause of the country, but the maiden herself never lost sight of that important moment, when, like females of more illustrious hopes, she might be required to sacrifice her love of country on the altar of domestic harmony. And yet, notwithstanding all her sagacity, there were moments when the good woman had grievous doubts into which scale she ought to throw the weight of her eloquence, in order to be certain of supporting the cause favored by the peddler.

There was so much that was equivocal in his movements and manner that often discretion sealed her mouth, and distrust beset her mind. Most of the movements of the peddler were made at the hours which others allotted to repose. The evening sun would frequently leave him at one extremity of the county, and the morning find him at the other. His pack was his never-failing companion; and there were those who closely studied him, in his moments of traffic, and thought his only purpose was the accumulation of gold. He would be often seen near the Highlands, with a body bending under its load; and again near the Harlem River, traveling with lighter steps, with his face towards the setting sun. But these glances at him were uncertain and fleeting. The intermediate time no eye could penetrate. For months he disappeared, and no traces of his course were ever known.

The house of Birch had been watched at different times by the Americans, with a view to his arrest, but never with success, the reputed spy possessing a secret means of intelligence that invariably defeated their schemes. Once, when a strong body of the continental army held the Four Corners for a whole summer, orders had been received from Washington himself, never to leave the door of Harvey Birch unwatched. The command was rigidly obeyed, and during this long period the peddler was unseen; the detachment was withdrawn, and the following night Birch reëntered his dwelling. The father of Harvey had been greatly molested,

in consequence of the suspicious character of the son. But, notwithstanding the most minute scrutiny into the conduct of the old man, no fact could be substantiated against him to his injury, and his property was too small to keep alive the zeal of patriots by profession. Its confiscation and purchase would not have rewarded their trouble. Age and sorrow were now about to spare him further molestation, for the lamp of life had been drained of its oil. The recent separation of the father and son had been painful, but they had submitted in obedience to what both thought a duty. The old man had kept his dying situation a secret from the neighborhood, in the hope that he might still have the company of his child in his last moments. The confusion of the day, and his increasing dread that Harvey might be too late, helped to hasten the event he would fain arrest for a little while. As night set in, his illness increased to such a degree that the dismayed housekeeper sent a truant boy, who had shut up himself with them, during the combat, to The Locusts, in quest of a companion to cheer her solitude. Cæsar, alone, could be spared, and, loaded with eatables and cordials by the kind-hearted Miss Peyton, the black had been dispatched on this duty. The dying man was past the use of medicines, and his chief anxiety seemed to center in a meeting with his child. He had closed his eyes, and his attendants believed him to be asleep. The house contained two large rooms, and as many small ones. One of the former served for kitchen and sitting-room; in the other lay the father of Birch; of the latter, one was the sanctuary of the vestal, and the other contained the stock of provisions. A huge chimney of stone rose in the center, serving, of itself, for a partition between the larger rooms; and fireplaces of corresponding dimensions were in each apartment. A bright flame was burning in that of the common room; and within the very jambs of its monstrous jaws sat Cæsar and Katy, at the time of which we write.

The African was impressing his caution on the housekeeper, and commenting on the general danger of indulging an idle curiosity.

"Best nebber tempt a Satan," said Cæsar, rolling up his eyes till the whites glistened by the glare of the fire; "I berry like heself to lose an ear for carrying a little bit of a letter; dere much mischief come of curiosity. If dere had nebber been a man curious to see Africa, dere would be no color people out of deir own country; but I wish Harvey get back."

"It is very disregardful in him to be away at such a time," said Katy, imposingly. "Suppose now his father wanted to make his last will in the testament, who is there to do so solemn and awful an act for him? Harvey is a very wasteful and a very disregardful man!"

"Perhap he make him afore."

"It would not be a wonderment if he had," returned the housekeeper; "he is whole days looking into the Bible."

"Then he read a berry good book," said the black, solemnly; "Miss Fanny read in him to Dinah now and den."

"You are right, Cæsar. The Bible is the best of books, and one that reads it as often as Harvey's father should have the best of reasons for so doing. This is no more than common sense."

She rose from her seat, and stealing softly to a chest of drawers in the room of the sick man, she took from it a large Bible, heavily bound, and secured with strong clasps of brass, with which she returned to the negro. The volume was eagerly opened, and they proceeded instantly to examine its pages. Katy was far from an expert scholar, and to Cæsar the characters were absolutely strangers. For some time the housekeeper was occupied in finding out the word Matthew, in which she had no sooner succeeded than she pointed out the word, with great complacency, to the attentive Cæsar.

"Berry well, now look him t'rough," said the black, peeping over the housekeeper's shoulder, as he held a long, lank candle of yellow tallow in such a manner as to throw its feeble light on the volume.

"Yes, but I must begin with the very beginning of the book," replied the other, turning the leaves carefully back, until, moving two at once, she lighted upon a page covered with writing. "Here," said the housekeeper, shaking with the eagerness of expectation, "here are the very words themselves; now I would give the world itself to know whom he has left the big silver shoe buckles to."

"Read 'em," said Cæsar, laconically.

"And the black walnut drawers; for Harvey could never want furniture of that quality, as long as he is a bachelor!"

"Why he no want 'em as well as he fader?"

"And the six silver tablespoons; Harvey always uses the iron!"

"P'r'ap he say, widout so much talk," returned the sententious black, pointing one of his crooked and dingy fingers at the open volume.

Thus repeatedly advised, and impelled by her own curiosity, Katy began to read. Anxious to come to the part which most interested herself, she dipped at once into the center of the subject.

"Chester Birch, born September 1st, 1755," read the spinster, with a deliberation that did no great honor to her scholarship.

"Well, what he gib him?"

"Abigail Birch, born July 12th, 1757," continued the housekeeper, in the same tone.

"I t'ink he ought to gib her 'e spoon."

"June 1st, 1760. On this awful day the judgment of an offended God lighted on my house —" A heavy groan from the adjoining room made the spinster instinctively close the volume, and Cæsar, for a moment, shook with fear. Neither

possessed sufficient resolution to go and examine the condition of the sufferer, but his heavy breathing continued as usual. Katy dared not, however, reopen the Bible, and carefully securing its clasps, she laid it on the table in silence. Cæsar took his chair again, and after looking timidly round the room, remarked —

“ I t’ought he time war’ come ! ”

“ No,” said Katy, solemnly, “ he will live till the tide is out, or the first cock crows in the morning.”

“ Poor man ! ” continued the black, nestling still farther into the chimney corner, “ I hope he lay quiet after he die.”

“ ’T would be no astonishment to me if he did n’t ; for they say an unquiet life makes an uneasy grave.”

“ Johnny Birch a berry good man in he way. All mankind can’t be a minister ; for if he do, who would be a congregation ? ”

“ Ah ! Cæsar, he is good only who does good — can you tell me why honestly gotten gold should be hidden in the bowels of the earth ? ”

“ Grach ! — I t’ink it must be to keep t’e Skinner from findin’ him ; if he know where he be, why don’t he dig him up ? ”

“ There may be reasons not comprehensible to you,” said Katy, moving her chair so that her clothes covered the charmed stone, underneath which lay the secret treasures of the peddler, unable to refrain from speaking of that which she would have been very unwilling to reveal ; “ but a rough outside often holds a smooth inside.” Cæsar stared around the building, unable to fathom the hidden meaning of his companion, when his roving eyes suddenly became fixed, and his teeth chattered with affright. The change in the countenance of the black was instantly perceived by Katy, and turning her face, she saw the peddler himself, standing within the door of the room.

“ Is he alive ? ” asked Birch, tremulously, and seemingly afraid to receive the answer.

"Surely," said Katy, rising hastily, and officiously offering her chair; "he must live till day, or till the tide is down."

Going quickly to his father's bedside, Harvey leaned his body forward, and, in a voice nearly choked by his feelings, he whispered near the ear of the sick —

"Father, do you know me?"

The parent slowly opened his eyes, and a smile of satisfaction passed over his pallid features, leaving behind it the impression of death, more awful by the contrast. The peddler gave a restorative he had brought with him to the parched lips of the sick man, and for a few minutes new vigor seemed imparted to his frame. He spoke, but slowly, and with difficulty. Curiosity kept Katy silent; awe had the same effect on Cæsar; and Harvey seemed hardly to breathe, as he listened to the language of the departing spirit.

"My son," said the father in a hollow voice, "God is as merciful as he is just; if I threw the cup of salvation from my lips when a youth, he graciously offers it to me in mine age. He has chastised to purify, and I go to join the spirits of our lost family. In a little while, my child, you will be alone. I know you too well not to foresee you will be a pilgrim through life. The bruised reed may endure, but it will never rise. You have that within you, Harvey, that will guide you aright; persevere, as you have begun, for the duties of life are never to be neglected — and —" A noise in the adjoining room interrupted the dying man, and the impatient peddler hastened to learn the cause, followed by Katy and the black. The first glance of his eye on the figure in the doorway told the trader but too well his errand, and the fate that probably awaited himself. The intruder was a man still young in years, but his lineaments bespoke a mind long agitated by evil passions. This man was a well-known leader of one of those gangs of marauders who infested the county with a semblance of patriotism, and who were guilty of every grade of offense, from simple theft up to murder. Behind him stood

several other figures all well armed with muskets and bayonets, and provided with the usual implements of foot-soldiers. Harvey knew resistance to be vain, and quietly submitted to their directions. In the twinkling of an eye both he and Cæsar were stripped of their decent garments, and made to exchange clothes with two of the filthiest of the band. They were then placed in separate corners of the room, and, under the muzzles of the muskets, required faithfully to answer such interrogatories as were put to them.

"Where is your pack?" was the first question to the peddler.

"Hear me," said Birch, trembling with agitation; "in the next room is my father, now in the agonies of death; let me go to him, receive his blessing, and close his eyes, and you shall have all — ay, all."

"Answer me as I put the questions, or this musket shall send you to keep the old driveler company; where is your pack?"

"I will tell you nothing, unless you let me go to my father," said the peddler, resolutely.

His persecutor raised his arm with a malicious sneer, and was about to execute his threat, when one of his companions checked him.

"What would you do?" he said, "you surely forget the reward. Tell us where are your goods, and you shall go to your father."

Birch complied instantly, and a man was dispatched in quest of the booty; he soon returned, throwing the bundle on the floor, swearing it was as light as feathers.

"Ay," cried the leader, "there must be gold somewhere for what it did contain. Give us your gold, Mr. Birch; we know you have it; you will not take continental, not you."

"You break your faith," said Harvey.

"Give us your gold," exclaimed the other, furiously, pricking the peddler with his bayonet until the blood followed

his pushes in streams. At this instant a slight movement was heard in the adjoining room, and Harvey cried imploringly —

“Let me — let me go to my father, and you shall have all.”

“I swear you shall go then,” said the Skinner.

“Here, take the trash,” cried Birch, as he threw aside the purse, which he had contrived to conceal, notwithstanding the change in his garments.

The robber raised it from the floor with a hellish laugh.

“Ay, but it shall be to your father in heaven.”

“Monster! have you no feeling, no faith, no honesty?”

“To hear him, one would think there was not a rope around his neck already,” said the other, laughing. “There is no necessity for your being uneasy, Mr. Birch; if the old man gets a few hours the start of you in the journey, you will be sure to follow him before noon to-morrow.”

This unfeeling communication had no effect on the peddler, who listened with gasping breath to every sound from the room of his parent, until he heard his own name spoken in the hollow, sepulchral tones of death. Birch could endure no more, but shrieking out, “Father! hush — father! I come — I come,” he darted by his keeper, and was the next moment pinned to the wall by the bayonet of another of the band. Fortunately, his quick motion had caused him to escape a thrust aimed at his life, and it was by his clothes only that he was confined.

“No, Mr. Birch,” said the Skinner, “we know you too well for a slippery rascal to trust you out of sight — your gold, your gold!”

“You have it,” said the peddler, writhing with agony.

“Ay, we have the purse, but you have more purses. King George is a prompt paymaster, and you have done him many a piece of good service. Where is your hoard? without it you will never see your father.”

“Remove the stone underneath the woman,” cried the peddler, eagerly — “remove the stone.”

"He raves! he raves!" said Katy, instinctively moving her position to a different stone from the one on which she had been standing. In a moment it was torn from its bed, and nothing but earth was seen beneath.

"He raves! you have driven him from his right mind," continued the trembling spinster; "would any man in his senses keep gold under a hearth?"

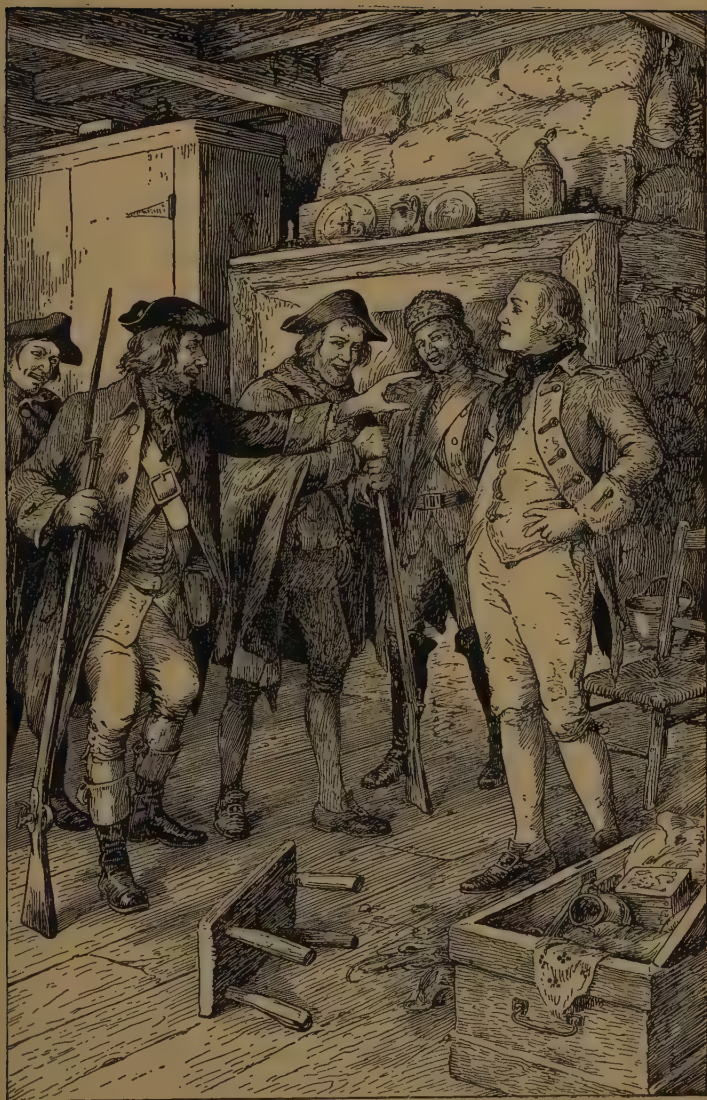
"Peace, babbling fool!" cried Harvey. "Lift the corner stone, and you will find that which will make you rich, and me a beggar."

"And then you will be despicable," said the housekeeper, bitterly. "A peddler without goods and without money is sure to be despicable."

"There will be enough left to pay for his halter," cried the Skinner, who was not slow to follow the instructions of Harvey, soon lighting upon a store of English guineas. The money was quickly transferred to a bag, notwithstanding the declarations of the spinster, that her dues were unsatisfied, and that, of right, ten of the guineas were her property.

Delighted with a prize that greatly exceeded their expectations, the band prepared to depart, intending to take the peddler with them, in order to give him up to the American troops above, and to claim the reward offered for his apprehension. Everything was ready, and they were about to lift Birch in their arms, for he resolutely refused to move an inch, when a form appeared in their midst, which appalled the stoutest heart among them. The father had arisen from his bed, and he tottered forth at the cries of his son. Around his body was thrown the sheet of the bed, and his fixed eye and haggard face gave him the appearance of a being from another world. Even Katy and Cæsar thought it was the spirit of the elder Birch, and they fled the house, followed by the alarmed Skinners in a body.

The excitement, which had given the sick man strength, soon vanished, and the peddler, lifting him in his arms,



reconveyed him to his bed. The reaction of the system which followed hastened to close the scene.

The glazed eye of the father was fixed upon the son; his lips moved, but his voice was unheard. Harvey bent down, and, with the parting breath of his parent, received his dying benediction. A life of privation, and of wrongs, embittered most of the future hours of the peddler. But under sufferings, in misfortunes, the subject of poverty and obloquy, the remembrance of that blessing never left him; it constantly gleamed over the images of the past, shedding a holy radiance around his saddest hours of despondency; it cheered the prospect of the future with the prayers of a pious spirit; and it brought the sweet assurance of having faithfully and truly discharged the sacred offices of filial love.

The retreat of Cæsar and the spinster had been too precipitate to admit of much calculation; yet they themselves instinctively separated from the Skinners. After fleeing a short distance they paused, and the maiden commenced in a solemn voice —

“Oh! Cæsar, was it not dreadful to walk before he had been laid in his grave! It must have been the money that disturbed him; they say Captain Kidd walks near the spot where he buried gold in the old war.”

“I neber t’ink Johnny Birch hab such a big eye!” said the African, his teeth yet chattering with the fright.

“I’m sure ’t would be a botherment to a living soul to lose so much money. Harvey will be nothing but an utterly despicable, poverty-stricken wretch. I wonder who he thinks would be even his housekeeper!”

“Maybe a spooke take away Harvey, too,” observed Cæsar, moving still nearer to the side of the maiden. But a new idea had seized the imagination of the spinster. She thought it not improbable that the prize had been forsaken in the confusion of the retreat; and after deliberating and reasoning for some time with Cæsar, they determined to

venture back, and ascertain this important fact, and, if possible, learn what had been the fate of the peddler. Much time was spent in cautiously approaching the dreaded spot; and as the spinster had sagaciously placed herself in the line of the retreat of the Skinners, every stone was examined in the progress in search of the abandoned gold. But although the suddenness of the alarm and the cry of Cæsar had impelled the freebooters to so hasty a retreat, they grasped the hoard with a hold that death itself would not have loosened. Perceiving everything to be quiet within, Katy at length mustered resolution to enter the dwelling, where she found the peddler, with a heavy heart, performing the last sad offices for the dead. A few words sufficed to explain to Katy the nature of her mistake; but Cæsar continued to his dying day to astonish the sable inmates of the kitchen with learned dissertations on *spookes*, and to relate how direful was the appearance of that of Johnny Birch.

The danger compelled the peddler to abridge even the short period that American custom leaves the deceased with us; and, aided by the black and Katy, his painful task was soon ended. Cæsar volunteered to walk a couple of miles with orders to a carpenter; and the body, being habited in its ordinary attire, was left, with a sheet thrown decently over it, to await the return of the messenger.

The Skinners had fled precipitately to the wood, which was but a short distance from the house of Birch, and once safely sheltered within its shades, they halted, and mustered their panic-stricken forces.

"What in the name of fury seized your coward hearts?" cried their dissatisfied leader, drawing his breath heavily.

"The same question might be asked yourself," returned one of the band, sullenly.

"From your fright, I thought a party of De Lancy's men were upon us. Oh! you are brave gentlemen at a race!"

"We follow our captain."

"Then follow me back, and let us secure the scoundrel, and receive the reward."

"Yes; and by the time we reach the house, that black rascal will have the mad Virginian upon us; by my soul, I would rather meet fifty cowboys than that single man."

"Fool!" cried the enraged leader, "don't you know Dunwoodie's horse are at the Corners, full two miles from here?"

"I care not where the dragoons are, but I will swear that I saw Captain Lawton enter the house of old Wharton while I lay watching an opportunity of getting the British colonel's horse from the stable."

"And if he should come, won't a bullet silence a dragoon from the South as well as one from old England?"

"Ay, but I don't choose a hornet's nest about my ears; rase the skin of one of that corps and you will never see another peaceable night's foraging again."

"Well," muttered the leader, as they retired deeper into the wood, "this sottish peddler will stay to see the old man buried; and though we cannot touch him at the funeral (for that would raise every old woman and priest in America against us), he'll wait to look after the movables, and to-morrow night shall wind up his concerns."

With this threat they withdrew to one of their usual places of resort, until darkness should again give them an opportunity of marauding on the community without danger of detection.

CHAPTER XI

THE family at The Locusts had slept, or watched, through all the disturbances at the cottage of Birch, in perfect ignorance of their occurrence. They had assembled in one of the parlors as the sun made its appearance over the eastern hill, dispersing the columns of fog which had enveloped the low land.

Miss Peyton was looking from a window in the direction of the tenement of the peddler, and was expressing a kind anxiety after the welfare of the sick man, when the person of Katy suddenly emerged from the dense covering of an earthly cloud, whose mists were scattering before the cheering rays of the sun, and was seen making hasty steps towards The Locusts. There was that in the air of the housekeeper which bespoke distress of an unusual nature, and the kind-hearted mistress of The Locusts opened the door of the room, with the benevolent intention of soothing a grief that seemed so overwhelming. A nearer view of the disturbed features of the visitor confirmed Miss Peyton in her belief ; and, with the shock that gentle feelings ever experience at a sudden and endless separation from even the meanest of their associates, she said hastily—

“Katy, is he gone?”

“No, ma’am,” replied the disturbed damsel, with great bitterness, “he is not yet gone, but he may go as soon as he pleases now, for the worst is done. I do verily believe, Miss Peyton, they have n’t so much as left him money enough to buy him another suit of clothes to cover his nakedness, and those he has on are none of the best, I can tell you.”

"How," exclaimed the other, astonished, "could any one have the heart to plunder a man in such distress?"

"Hearts!" repeated Katy, catching her breath; "men like them have no bowels at all. Plunder and distress, indeed! Why, ma'am, there were in the iron pot, in plain sight, fifty-four guineas of gold, besides what lay underneath, which I could n't count without handling; and I did n't like to touch it, for they say that another's gold is apt to stick — so, judging from that in sight, there was n't less than two hundred guineas, besides what might have been in the deer-skin purse. But Harvey is little better now than a beggar; and a beggar, Miss Jeanette, is the most awfully despicable of all earthly creatures."

"Poverty is to be pitied, and not despised," said the lady, still unable to comprehend the extent of the misfortune that had befallen her neighbor during the night. "But how is the old man? and does this loss affect him much?"

The countenance of Katy changed, from the natural expression of concern, to the set form of melancholy, as she answered —

"He is happily removed from the cares of the world; the chinking of the money made him get out of his bed, and the poor soul found the shock too great for him. He died about two hours and ten minutes before the cock crowed, as near as we can say —" She was interrupted by the physician, who, approaching, inquired, with much interest, the nature of the disorder. Glancing her eye over the figure of this new acquaintance, Katy, instinctively adjusting her dress, replied —

"'T was the troubles of the times and the loss of property that brought him down; he wasted from day to day, and all my care and anxiety were lost; for now Harvey is no better than a beggar, and who is there to pay me for what I have done?"

"God will reward you for all the good you have done," said Miss Peyton, mildly.

"Yes," interrupted the spinster, hastily, and with an air of reverence that was instantly succeeded by an expression that denoted more of worldly care; "but then I have left my wages for three years past in the hands of Harvey, and how am I to get them? My brothers told me, again and again, to ask for my money; but I always thought accounts between relations were easily settled."

"Were you related, then, to Birch?" asked Miss Peyton, observing her to pause.

"Why," returned the housekeeper, hesitating a little, "I thought we were as good as so. I wonder if I have no claim on the house and garden; though they say, now it is Harvey's, it will surely be confiscated"; turning to Lawton, who had been sitting in one posture, with his piercing eyes lowering at her through his thick brows, in silence, "perhaps this gentleman knows — he seems to take an interest in my story."

"Madam," said the trooper, bowing very low, "both you and the tale are extremely interesting" — Katy smiled involuntarily — "but my humble knowledge is limited to the setting of a squadron in the field, and using it when there. I beg leave to refer you to Dr. Archibald Sitgreaves, a gentleman of universal attainments, and unbounded philanthropy; the very milk of human sympathies, and a mortal foe to all indiscriminate cutting."

The surgeon drew up, and employed himself in whistling a low air, as he looked over some phials on a table; but the housekeeper, turning to him with an inclination of the head, continued —

"I suppose, sir, a woman has no dower in her husband's property unless they be actually married?"

It was a maxim with Dr. Sitgreaves that no species of knowledge was to be despised; and, consequently, he was an empiric in everything but his profession. At first, indignation at the irony of his comrade kept him silent; but,

suddenly changing his purpose, he answered the applicant with a good-natured smile —

"I judge not. If death has anticipated your nuptials, I am fearful you have no remedy against his stern decrees."

To Katy this sounded well, although she understood nothing of its meaning but "death" and "nuptials." To this part of his speech, then, she directed her reply.

"I did think he only waited the death of the old gentleman before he married," said the housekeeper, looking on the carpet; "but now he is nothing more than despicable, or, what's the same thing, a peddler without house, pack, or money. It might be hard for a man to get a wife at all in such a predicament — don't you think it would, Miss Peyton?"

"I seldom trouble myself with such things," said the lady, gravely.

Miss Peyton entered into the situation of things at the house of the peddler with all the interest of her excellent feelings; she listened patiently while Katy recounted, more particularly, the circumstances of the past night as they had occurred. The spinster did not forget to dwell on the magnitude of the pecuniary loss sustained by Harvey, and in no manner spared her invectives at his betraying a secret which might so easily have been kept.

"For, Miss Peyton," continued the housekeeper, after a pause to take breath, "I would have given up life before I would have given up that secret. At the most, they could only have killed him, and now a body may say that they have slain both soul and body; or, what's the same thing, they have made him a despicable vagabond. I wonder who he thinks would be his wife, or who would keep his house. For my part, my good name is too precious to be living with a lone man; though, for the matter of that, he is never there. I am resolved to tell him this day, that stay there, a single woman, I will not an hour, after the funeral; and marry him I don't think I will, unless he becomes steadier, and more of a home body."

The mild mistress of The Locusts suffered the exuberance of the housekeeper's feeling to expend itself, and then, by one or two judicious questions, that denoted a more intimate knowledge of the windings of the human heart in matters of Cupid than might fairly be supposed to belong to a spinster, she extracted enough from Katy to discover the improbability of Harvey's ever presuming to offer himself, with his broken fortunes, to the acceptance of Katharine Haynes. She therefore mentioned her own want of assistance in the present state of her household, and expressed a wish that Katy would change her residence to The Locusts, in case the peddler had no further use for her services. After a few preliminary conditions on the part of the wary housekeeper, the arrangement was concluded; and making a few more piteous lamentations on the weight of her own losses, and the stupidity of Harvey, united with some curiosity to know the future fate of the peddler, Katy withdrew to make the necessary preparations for the approaching funeral, which was to take place that day.

CHAPTER XII

THE number and character of her guests had greatly added to the cares of Miss Jeanette Peyton. The morning found them all restored, in some measure, to their former ease of body, with the exception of the youthful captain of dragoons, who had been so deeply regretted by Dunwoodie. The wound of this officer was severe, though the surgeon persevered in saying that it was without danger. His comrade, we have shown, had deserted his couch; and Henry Wharton awoke from a sleep that had been undisturbed by anything but a dream of suffering amputation under the hands of a surgical novice. As it proved, however, to be nothing but a dream, the youth found himself much refreshed by his slumbers; and Dr. Sitgreaves removed all further apprehensions by confidently pronouncing that he would be a well man within a fortnight.

During all this time Colonel Wellmere did not make his appearance; he breakfasted in his own room, and, notwithstanding certain significant smiles of the man of science, declared himself too much injured to rise from his bed. Leaving him, therefore, endeavoring to conceal his chagrin in the solitude of his chamber, the surgeon proceeded to the more grateful task of sitting an hour by the bedside of George Singleton. A slight flush was on the face of the patient as the doctor entered the room; and the latter advanced promptly, and laid his fingers on the pulse of the youth, beckoning to him to be silent, while he muttered to himself —

“Growing symptoms of a febrile pulse — no, no, my dear George, you must remain quiet and dumb; though your

eyes look better, and your skin has even a moisture. Why, George, your case is becoming singular," continued the doctor, instinctively throwing aside his wig; "your pulse even and soft, your skin moist, but your eye fiery, and cheek flushed. Oh! I must examine more closely into these symptoms."

"Softly, my good friend, softly," said the youth, falling back on his pillow, and losing some of that color which alarmed his companion; "I believe, in extracting the ball, you did for me all that is required. I am free from pain, and only weak, I do assure you."

"Captain Singleton," said the surgeon, with heat, "it is presumptuous in you to pretend to tell your medical attendant when you are free from pain; if it be not to enable us to decide in such matters, of what avail the lights of science? For shame, George, for shame! even that perverse fellow, John Lawton, could not behave with more obstinacy."

His patient smiled, as he gently repulsed his physician in an attempt to undo the bandages, and, with a returning glow to his cheeks, inquired —

"Do, Archibald," — a term of endearment that seldom failed to soften the operator's heart, — "tell me what spirit from heaven has been gliding around my apartment while I lay pretending to sleep." —

"If anyone interferes with my patients," cried the doctor, hastily, "I will teach them, spirit or no spirit, what it is to meddle with another man's concerns."

"Tut! my dear fellow, there was no interference made, nor any intended; see," exhibiting the bandages, "everything is as you left it, — but it glided about the room with the grace of a fairy and the tenderness of an angel."

The surgeon, having satisfied himself that everything was as he had left it, very deliberately resumed his seat and replaced his wig, as he inquired, with a brevity that would have honored Lieutenant Mason —

"Had it petticoats, George?"

"I saw nothing but its heavenly eyes — its bloom — its majestic step — its grace," replied the young man, with rather more ardor than his surgeon thought consistent with his debilitated condition; and he laid his hand on his mouth to stop him, saying himself —

"It must have been Miss Jeanette Peyton — a lady of fine accomplishments, with — hem — with something of the kind of step you speak of — a very complacent eye; and as to the bloom, I dare say offices of charity can summon as fine a color to her cheeks as glows in the faces of her more youthful nieces."

"Nieces! has she nieces, then? The angel I saw may be a daughter, a sister, or a niece, — but never an aunt."

"Hush, George, hush; your talking has brought your pulse up again. You must observe quiet, and prepare for a meeting with your own sister, who will be here within an hour."

"What, Isabella! and who sent for her?"

"The major."

"Considerate Dunwoodie!" murmured the exhausted youth, sinking again on his pillow, where the commands of his attendant compelled him to remain silent.

Even Captain Lawton had been received with many and courteous inquiries after the state of his health, from all the members of the family, when he made his morning entrance; but an invisible spirit presided over the comforts of the English colonel. Sarah had shrunk with consciousness from entering the room; yet she knew the position of every glass, and had, with her own hands, supplied the contents of every bowl that stood on his table.

At the time of our tale we were a divided people, and Sarah thought it was no more than her duty to cherish the institutions of that country to which she yet clung as the land of her forefathers; but there were other and more

cogent reasons for the silent preference she was giving to the Englishman. His image had first filled the void in her youthful fancy, and it was an image that was distinguished by many of those attractions that can enchain a female heart.

In passing through the long gallery that communicated with each of the chambers of the building, she noticed the door of Singleton's room to be open. The wounded youth seemed sleeping, and was alone. She had ventured lightly into the apartment, and busied herself for a few minutes in arranging the tables and the nourishment provided for the patient, hardly conscious of what she was doing, and possibly dreaming that these little feminine offices were performed for another. The sound of the approaching footstep of Sitgreaves hastened her retreat down a private stairway, to the side of her sister. The sisters then sought the fresh air on the piazza; and as they pursued their walk, arm in arm, the following dialogue took place:

"There is something disagreeable about this surgeon of Dunwoodie," said Sarah, "that causes me to wish him away most heartily."

Frances fixed her laughing eyes on her sister; but forbearing to speak, the other readily construed their expression, and hastily added, "But I forget he is one of your renowned corps of Virginians, and must be spoken of reverently."

"As respectfully as you please, my dear sister; there is but little danger of exceeding the truth."

"Not in your opinion," said the elder, with a little warmth; "but I think Mr. Dunwoodie has taken a liberty that exceeds the rights of consanguinity; he has made our father's house a hospital."

"We ought to be grateful that none of the patients it contains are dearer to us."

"Your brother is one."

"True, true," interrupted Frances, blushing to the eyes; "but he leaves his room, and thinks his wound lightly

purchased by the pleasure of being with his friends. If," she added, with a tremulous lip, "this dreadful suspicion that is affixed to his visit were removed, I could consider his wound of little moment."

"You now have the fruits of rebellion brought home to you; a brother wounded and a prisoner, and perhaps a victim; your father distressed, his privacy interrupted, and not improbably his estates torn from him, on account of his loyalty to his king."

Frances continued her walk in silence. While facing the northern entrance to the vale, her eyes were uniformly fastened on the point where the road was suddenly lost by the intervention of a hill; and at each turn, as she lost sight of the spot, she lingered until an impatient movement of her sister quickened her pace to an even motion with that of her own. At length, a single-horse chaise was seen making its way carefully among the stones which lay scattered over the country road that wound through the valley, and approached the cottage. The color of Frances changed as the vehicle gradually drew nearer; and when she was enabled to see a female form in it by the side of a black in livery, her limbs shook with an agitation that compelled her to lean on Sarah for support. In a few minutes the travelers approached the gate. It was thrown open by a dragoon who followed the carriage, and who had been the messenger dispatched by Dunwoodie to the father of Captain Singleton. Miss Peyton advanced to receive their guest, and the sisters united in giving her the kindest welcome; still Frances could with difficulty withdraw her truant eyes from the countenance of their visitor. She was young, and of a light and fragile form, but of exquisite proportions. Her eye was large, full, black, piercing, and at times a little wild. Her hair was luxuriant, and as it was without the powder it was then the fashion to wear, it fell in raven blackness. A few of its locks had fallen on her cheek, giving its chilling whiteness

by the contrast a more deadly character. Dr. Sitgreaves supported her from the chaise ; and when she gained the floor of the piazza, she turned an expressive look on the face of the practitioner.

"Your brother is out of danger, and wishes to see you, Miss Singleton," said the surgeon.

The lady burst into a flood of tears. Frances had stood contemplating the action and face of Isabella with a kind of uneasy admiration, but she now sprang to her side with the ardor of a sister, and kindly drawing her arm within her own, led the way to a retired room. The movement was so ingenuous, so considerate, and so delicate, that even Miss Peyton withheld her interference, following the youthful pair with only her eyes and a smile of complacency. The feeling was communicated to all the spectators, and they dispersed in pursuit of their usual avocations. Isabella yielded to the gentle influence of Frances without resistance ; and, having gained the room where the latter conducted her, wept in silence on the shoulder of the observant and soothing girl, until Frances thought her tears exceeded the emotion natural to the occasion. The sobs of Miss Singleton for a time were violent and uncontrollable, until, with an evident exertion, she yielded to a kind observation of her companion, and succeeded in suppressing her tears. Raising her face to the eyes of Frances, she rose, while a smile of beautiful radiance passed over her features ; and making a hasty apology for the excess of her emotion, she desired to be conducted to the room of the invalid.

The meeting between the brother and sister was warm, but, by an effort on the part of the lady, more composed than her previous agitation had given reason to expect. Isabella found her brother looking better, and in less danger than her sensitive imagination had led her to suppose. Her spirits rose in proportion ; from despondency, she passed to something like gayety ; her beautiful eyes sparkled with renovated

brilliancy; and her face was lighted with smiles so fascinating that Frances, who, in compliance with her earnest entreaties, had accompanied her to the sick chamber, sat gazing on a countenance that possessed so wonderful variability, impelled by a charm that was beyond her control. The youth had thrown an earnest look at Frances, as soon as his sister raised herself from his arms, and perhaps it was the first glance at the lovely lineaments of our heroine, when the gazer turned his eyes from the view in disappointment. He seemed bewildered, rubbed his forehead like a man awaking from a dream, and mused.

"Where is Dunwoodie, Isabella?" he said; "the excellent fellow is never weary of kind actions. After a day of such service as that of yesterday, he has spent the night in bringing me a nurse whose presence alone is able to raise me from my couch."

The expression of the lady's countenance changed; her eye roved round the apartment with a character of wildness in it that repelled the anxious Frances, who studied her movements with unabated interest.

"Dunwoodie! is he then not here? I thought to have met him by the side of my brother's bed."

"He has duties that require his presence elsewhere; the English are said to be out by the way of the Hudson, and they give us light troops but little rest; surely nothing else could have kept him so long from a wounded friend. But, Isabella, the meeting has been too much for you; you tremble."

Isabella made no reply; she stretched her hand towards the table which held the nourishment of the captain, and the attentive Frances comprehended her wishes in a moment. A glass of water in some measure revived the sister, who was enabled to say—

"Doubtless it is his duty. 'Twas said above, a royal party was moving on the river; though I passed the troops

but two miles from this spot." The latter part of the sentence was hardly audible, and it was spoken more in the manner of a soliloquy than as if intended for the ears of her companions.

"On the march, Isabella?" eagerly inquired her brother.

"No, dismounted, and seemingly at rest," was the reply.

The wondering dragoon turned his gaze on the countenance of his sister, who sat with her eye bent on the carpet in unconscious absence, but found no explanation. His look was changed to the face of Frances, who, startled by the earnestness of his expression, arose, and hastily inquired if he would have any assistance.

"If you can pardon the rudeness," said the wounded officer, making a feeble effort to raise his body, "I would request to have Captain Lawton's company for a moment."

Frances hastened instantly to communicate his wish to that gentleman, and, impelled by an interest she could not control, she returned again to her seat by the side of Miss Singleton.

"Lawton," said the youth, impatiently, as the trooper entered, "hear you from the major?"

The eye of the sister was now bent on the face of the trooper, who made his salutations to the lady with ease, blended with the frankness of a soldier.

"His man has been here twice," he said, "to inquire how we fared in the Lazaretto."

"And why not himself?"

"That is a question the major can answer best; but you know the redcoats are abroad, and Dunwoodie commands in the county; these English must be looked to."

"True," said Singleton, slowly, as if struck with the other's reasons; "but how is it that you are idle when there is work to do?"

"My sword arm is not in the best condition, and Roanoke has but a shambling gait this morning; besides, there is

another reason I could mention, if it were not that Miss Wharton would never forgive me."

"Speak, I beg, without dread of my displeasure," said Frances, returning the good-humored smile of the trooper, with the archness natural to her own sweet face.

"The odors of your kitchen, then," cried Lawton, bluntly, "forbid my quitting the domains until I qualify myself to speak with more certainty concerning the fatness of the land."

"Oh! Aunt Jeanette is exerting herself to do credit to my father's hospitality," said the laughing girl, "and I am a truant from her labors, as I shall be a stranger to her favor unless I proffer my assistance."

Frances withdrew to seek her aunt, musing deeply on the character and extreme sensibility of the new acquaintance chance had brought to the cottage.

The wounded officer followed her with his eyes, as she moved, with infantile grace, through the door of his apartment, and as she vanished from his view, he observed —

"Such an aunt and niece are seldom to be met with, Jack; this seems a fairy, but the aunt is angelic."

"You are doing well, I see; your enthusiasm for the sex holds its own."

"I should be ungrateful as well as insensible, did I not bear testimony to the loveliness of Miss Peyton."

"A good motherly lady, but as to love, that is a matter of taste. A few years younger, with deference to her prudence and experience, would accord better with my fancy."

"She must be under twenty," said the other, quickly.

"It depends on the way you count. If you begin at the heel of life, well; but if you reckon downward, as is most common, I think she is nearer forty."

"You have mistaken an elder sister for the aunt," said Isabella, laying her fair hand on the mouth of the invalid; "you must be silent! your feelings are beginning to affect your frame."

The entrance of Dr. Sitgreaves, who, in some alarm, noticed the increase of feverish symptoms in his patient, enforced this mandate; and the trooper withdrew to pay a visit of condolence to Roanoke, who had been an equal sufferer with himself in their last night's somersault. To his great joy, his man pronounced the steed to be equally convalescent with the master; and Lawton found that by dint of rubbing the animal's limbs several hours without ceasing, he was enabled to place his feet in what he called systematic motion. Orders were accordingly given to be in readiness to rejoin the troop at the Four Corners, as soon as his master had shared in the bounty of the approaching banquet.

In the meantime Henry Wharton entered the apartment of Wellmere, and by his sympathy succeeded in restoring the colonel to his own good graces.

NOTE. Chapter XIII is omitted as having little bearing on the development of the story.

CHAPTER XIV

IN THE confusion and agitation produced by the events we have recorded, the death of the elder Birch had occurred unnoticed ; but a sufficient number of the immediate neighbors were hastily collected, and the ordinary rites of sepulture were now about to be paid to the deceased. Four men supported the body on a rude bier ; and four others walked in advance, ready to relieve their friends from their burden. The peddler walked next the coffin, and by his side moved Katy Haynes, with a most determined aspect of woe, and next to the mourners came Mr. Wharton and the English captain. Two or three old men and women, with a few straggling boys, brought up the rear. Captain Lawton sat in his saddle, in rigid silence, until the bearers came opposite to his position, and then, for the first time, Harvey raised his eyes from the ground, and saw the enemy that he dreaded so near him. The first impulse of the peddler was certainly flight ; but recovering his recollection, he fixed his eye on the coffin of his parent, and passed the dragoon with a firm step but swelling heart. The trooper slowly lifted his cap, and continued uncovered until Mr. Wharton and his son had moved by, when, accompanied by the surgeon, he rode leisurely in the rear, maintaining an inflexible silence.

The graveyard was an inclosure on the grounds of Mr. Wharton, which had been fenced with stone, and set apart for the purpose, by that gentleman, some years before. It was not, however, intended as a burial place for any of his own family. Until the fire which raged as the British troops took possession of New York had laid Trinity in ashes, a goodly gilded tablet on its walls proclaimed the virtues of

his deceased parents, and beneath a flag of marble, in one of the aisles of the church, their bones were left to molder in aristocratical repose. Captain Lawton made a movement as if he was disposed to follow the procession, when it left the highway to enter the field which contained the graves of the humble dead, but at a hint from his companion that he was taking the wrong road, he continued his ride with the surgeon to the quarters of the corps.

Birch supported the grave and collected manner that was thought becoming in a male mourner on such occasions, and to Katy was left the part of exhibiting the tenderness of the softer sex. There are some people whose feelings are of such a nature that they cannot weep unless it be in proper company, and the spinster was a good deal addicted to this congregational virtue. After casting her eyes round the small assemblage, the housekeeper found the countenances of the few females who were present fixed on her in solemn expectation, and the effect was instantaneous ; the maiden really wept, and she gained no inconsiderable sympathy, and some reputation for a tender heart, from the spectators. The muscles of the peddler's face were seen to move. He bent his body down as if in pain, his fingers worked while the hands hung lifeless by his side, and there was an expression in his countenance that seemed to announce a writhing of the soul ; but it was not unresisted, and it was transient. He stood erect, drew a long breath, and looked around him with an elevated face, that even seemed to smile with a consciousness of having obtained the mastery. The grave was soon filled ; a rough stone, placed at either extremity, marked its position, and the turf, whose faded vegetation was adapted to the fortunes of the deceased, covered the little hillock with the last office of seemliness. The neighbors, lifting their hats, stood looking towards the mourner, who now felt himself to be really alone in the world. Uncovering his head also, the peddler hesitated a moment, to gather energy, and spoke.

"My friends and neighbors," he said, "I thank you for assisting me to bury my dead."

A solemn pause succeeded the customary address, and the group dispersed in silence, some few walking with the mourners back to their own habitation, but respectfully leaving them at its entrance. The peddler and Katy were followed into the building by one man, however, who was well known to the surrounding country by the significant term of "a speculator." Katy saw him enter, with a heart that palpitated with dreadful forebodings, but Harvey civilly handed him a chair, and evidently was prepared for the visit.

The peddler went to the door, and, taking a cautious glance about the valley, quickly returned, and commenced the following dialogue—

"The sun has just left the top of the eastern hill; my time presses me; here is the deed for the house and lot; everything is done according to law."

The other took the paper, and conned its contents with a deliberation that proceeded partly from his caution, and partly from the unlucky circumstance of his education having been much neglected when a youth. The time occupied in this tedious examination was employed by Harvey in gathering together certain articles, which he intended to include in the stores that were to leave the habitation with himself. Katy had already inquired of the peddler, whether the deceased had left a will; and she saw the Bible placed in the bottom of a new pack, which she had made for his accommodation, with a most stoical indifference; but as the six silver spoons were laid carefully by its side, a sudden twinge of her conscience objected to such a palpable waste of property, and she broke silence.

"When you marry, Harvey, you may miss those spoons."

"I never shall marry."

"Well, if you don't, there's no occasion to make rash promises, even to yourself. One never knows what one

may do, in such a case. I should like to know, of what use so many spoons can be to a single man; for my part, I think it is a duty for every man who is well provided, to have a wife and family to maintain."

At the time when Katy expressed this sentiment, the fortune of women in her class of life consisted of a cow, a bed, the labors of their own hands in the shape of divers pillowcases, blankets, and sheets, with, where fortune was unusually kind, a half-dozen silver spoons. The spinster herself had obtained all the other necessities by her own industry and prudence, and it can easily be imagined that she saw the articles she had long counted her own vanish in the enormous pack, with a dissatisfaction that was in no degree diminished by the declaration that had preceded the act. Harvey, however, disregarded her opinions and feelings, and continued his employment of filling the pack, which soon grew to something like the ordinary size of the peddler's burden.

"I'm rather timersome about this conveyance," said the purchaser, having at length waded through the covenants of the deed.

"Why so?"

"I'm afraid it won't stand good in law. I know that two of the neighbors leave home to-morrow morning, to have the place entered for confistigation; and if I should give forty pounds, and lose it all, 't would be a dead pullback to me."

"They can only take my right," said the peddler; "pay me two hundred dollars, and the house is yours; you are a well-known Whig, and you at least they won't trouble." As Harvey spoke, there was a strange bitterness of manner, mingled with the shrewd care he expressed concerning the sale of his property.

"Say one hundred, and it is a bargain," returned the man, with a grin that he meant for a good-natured smile.

"A bargain!" echoed the peddler, in surprise; "I thought the bargain already made."

"Nothing is a bargain," said the purchaser, with a chuckle, "until papers are delivered, and the money paid in hand."

"You have the paper."

"Ay, and will keep it, if you will excuse the money; come, say one hundred and fifty, and I won't be hard; here — here is just the money."

The peddler looked from the window, and saw with dismay that the evening was fast advancing, and knew well that he endangered his life by remaining in the dwelling after dark; yet he could not tolerate the idea of being defrauded in this manner, in a bargain that had already been fairly made; he hesitated.

"Well," said the purchaser, rising, "mayhap you can find another man to trade with between this and morning; but, if you don't, your title won't be worth much afterwards."

"Take it, Harvey," said Katy, who felt it impossible to resist a tender like the one before her; for the purchase money was in English guineas. Her voice roused the peddler, and a new idea seemed to strike him.

"I agree to the price," he said; and, turning to the spinster, he placed part of the money in her hand as he continued, "had I other means to pay you, I would have lost all rather than have suffered myself to be defrauded of part."

"You may lose all yet," muttered the stranger, with a sneer, as he rose and left the building.

"Yes," said Katy, following him with her eyes; "he knows your failing, Harvey; he thinks with me, now the old gentleman is gone, you will want a careful body to take care of your concerns."

The peddler was busied in making arrangements for his departure, and he took no notice of this insinuation, while the spinster returned again to the attack. She had lived

so many years in expectation of a termination to her hopes so different from that which now seemed likely to occur that the idea of separation began to give her more uneasiness than she had thought herself capable of feeling, about a man so destitute and friendless.

"Have you another house to go to?" inquired Katy.

"Providence will provide me with a home."

"Yes," said the housekeeper; "but maybe 't will not be to your liking."

"The poor must not be difficult."

"I'm sure I'm anything but a difficult body," cried the spinster, very hastily; "but I love to see things becoming, and in their places; yet I would n't be hard to persuade to leave this place myself. I can't say I altogether like the ways of the people hereabouts."

"The valley is lovely," said the peddler, with fervor, "and the people like all the race of man. But to me it matters nothing; all places are now alike, and all faces equally strange." As he spoke he dropped the article he was packing from his hand, and seated himself on a chest, with a look of vacant misery.

"Not so, not so," said Katy, shoving her chair nearer to the place where the peddler sat; "not so, Harvey, you must know me at least; my face cannot be strange to you, certainly."

Birch turned his eyes slowly on her countenance, which exhibited more of feeling, and less of self, than he had ever seen there before; he took her hand kindly, and his own features lost some of their painful expression, as he said —

"Yes, good woman, you, at least, are not a stranger to me; you may do me partial justice; when others revile me, possibly your feelings may lead you to say something in my defense."

"That I will; that I would!" said Katy, eagerly; "I will defend you, Harvey, to the last drop; let me hear them

that dare revile you ! you say true, Harvey, I am partial and just to you ; what if you do like the king ? I have often heard it said he was at the bottom a good man ; but there 's no religion in the old country, for everybody allows the ministers are desperate bad ! ”

The peddler paced the floor in evident distress of mind ; his eye had a look of wildness that Katy had never witnessed before, and his step was measured, with a dignity that appalled the housekeeper.

“ While my father lived,” murmured Harvey, unable to smother his feelings, “ there was one who read my heart ; and oh ! what a consolation to return from my secret marches of danger, and the insults and wrongs that I suffered, to receive his blessing and his praise ; but he is gone,” he continued, stopping and gazing wildly towards the corner that used to hold the figure of his parent, “ and who is there to do me justice ? ”

“ Why, Harvey ! Harvey ! ”

“ Yes, there is one who will, who must know me before I die ! Oh ! it is dreadful to die, and leave such a name behind me.”

“ Don't talk of dying, Harvey,” said the spinster, glancing her eye around the room, and pushing the wood in the fire to obtain a light from the blaze.

The ebullition of feeling in the peddler was over. It had been excited by the events of the past day, and a vivid perception of his sufferings. It was not long, however, that passion maintained an ascendancy over the reason of this singular man ; and perceiving that the night had already thrown an obscurity around objects without doors, he hastily threw his pack over his shoulders, and taking Katy kindly by the hand, in leave-taking —

“ It is painful to part with even you, good woman,” he said ; “ but the hour has come, and I must go. What is left in the house is yours ; to me it could be of no use, and

it may serve to make you more comfortable. Farewell — we shall meet hereafter."

"In the regions of darkness!" cried a voice that caused the peddler to sink on the chest from which he had risen, in despair.

"What! another pack, Mr. Birch, and so well stuffed so soon!"

"Have you not done evil enough?" cried the peddler, regaining his firmness, and springing on his feet with energy; "is it not enough to harass the last moments of a dying man, to impoverish me? What more would you have?"

"Your blood!" said the Skinner, with cool malignity.

"And for money," cried Harvey, bitterly; "like the ancient Judas, you would grow rich with the price of blood!"

"Ay, and a fair price it is, my gentleman; fifty guineas; nearly the weight of that scarecrow carcass of yours in gold."

"Here," said Katy, promptly; "here are fifteen guineas, and these drawers and this bed are all mine; if you will give Harvey but one hour's start from the door, they shall be yours."

"One hour?" said the Skinner, showing his teeth, and looking with a longing eye at the money.

"But a single hour; here, take the money."

"Hold!" cried Harvey; "put no faith in the miscreant."

"She may do what she pleases with her faith," said the Skinner, with malignant pleasure; "but I have the money in good keeping; as for you, Mr. Birch, we will bear your insolence, for the fifty guineas that are to pay for your gallows."

"Go on," said the peddler, proudly; "take me to Major Dunwoodie; he, at least, may be kind, although he may be just."

"I can do better than by marching so far in such disgraceful company; this Mr. Dunwoodie has let one or two

Tories go at large; but the troop of Captain Lawton is quartered some half mile nearer, and his receipt will get me the reward as soon as his major's; how relish you the idea of supping with Captain Lawton this evening, Mr. Birch?"

"Give me my money, or set Harvey free," cried the spinster, in alarm.

"Your bribe was not enough, good woman, unless there is money in this bed"; thrusting his bayonet through the ticking, and ripping it for some distance, he took a malicious satisfaction in scattering its contents about the room.

"If," cried the housekeeper, losing sight of her personal danger, in care for her newly acquired property, "there is law in the land, I will be righted!"

"The law of the Neutral Ground is the law of the strongest; but your tongue is not as long as my bayonet; you had, therefore, best not set them at loggerheads, or you might be the loser."

A figure stood in the shadow of the door, as if afraid to be seen in the group of Skinners; but a blaze of light, raised by some articles thrown in the fire by his persecutors, showed the peddler the face of the purchaser of his little domain. Occasionally there was some whispering between this man and the Skinner nearest him that induced Harvey to suspect he had been the dupe of a contrivance in which that wretch had participated. It was, however, too late to repine; and he followed the party from the house with a firm and collected tread, as if marching to a triumph, and not to a gallows. In passing through the yard, the leader of the band fell over a billet of wood, and received a momentary hurt from the fall; exasperated at the incident, the fellow sprang on his feet, filling the air with execrations.

"The curse of Heaven light on the log!" he exclaimed; "the night is too dark for us to move in; throw that brand of fire in yon pile of tow, to light up the scene."

"Hold!" roared the speculator; "you'll fire the house."

"And see the farther," said the other, hurling the brand in the midst of the combustibles. In an instant the building was in flames. "Come on; let us move towards the heights while we have light to pick our road."

"Villain!" cried the exasperated purchaser, "is this your friendship—this my reward for kidnaping the peddler?"

"'T would be wise to move more from the light, if you mean to entertain us with abuse, or we may see too well to miss our mark," cried the leader of the gang. The next instant he was as good as his threat, but happily missed the terrified speculator and equally appalled spinster, who saw herself again reduced from comparative wealth to poverty, by the blow. Prudence dictated to the pair a speedy retreat; and the next morning the only remains of the dwelling of the peddler was the huge chimney.

CHAPTER XV

TOWARDS evening the cold blasts poured down from the mountains, and flurries of snow plainly indicated that the month of November had arrived; a season whose temperature varies from the heats of summer to the cold of winter. Frances had stood at the window of her own apartment, watching the slow progress of the funeral procession, with a melancholy that was too deep to be excited by the spectacle. She had witnessed the disappearance of the wooden tenement of the deceased, as it was slowly lowered from the light of day; and the sight added to the chilling dreariness of the view. Captain Singleton was sleeping under the care of his own man, while his sister had been persuaded to take possession of her room, for the purpose of obtaining the repose of which her last night's journeying had robbed her. The apartment of Miss Singleton communicated with the room occupied by the sisters, through a private door, as well as through the ordinary passage of the house; this door was partly open, and Frances moved towards it, with the benevolent intention of ascertaining the situation of her guest, when the surprised girl saw her whom she had thought to be sleeping, not only awake, but employed in a manner that banished all probability of present repose. The black tresses, that during the dinner had been drawn in close folds over the crown of the head, were now loosened, and fell in profusion over her shoulders and bosom, imparting a slight degree of wildness to her countenance; the chilling white of her complexion was strongly contrasted with eyes of the deepest black, that were fixed in rooted attention on a picture she held in her hand. Frances hardly

breathed, as she was enabled, by a movement of Isabella, to see that it was the figure of a man in the well-known dress of the southern horse; but she gasped for breath, and instinctively laid her hand on her heart to quell its throbbings, as she thought she recognized the lineaments that were so deeply seated in her own imagination. Frances felt she was improperly prying into the sacred privacy of another; but her emotions were too powerful to permit her to speak, and she drew back to a chair, where she still retained a view of the stranger, from whose countenance she felt it to be impossible to withdraw her eyes. Isabella was too much engrossed by her own feelings to discover the trembling figure of the witness to her actions, and she pressed the inanimate image to her lips, with an enthusiasm that denoted the most intense passion. The expression of the countenance of the fair stranger was so changeable, and the transitions were so rapid, that Frances had scarcely time to distinguish the character of the emotion, before it was succeeded by another, equally powerful and equally attractive. Admiration and sorrow were, however, the preponderating passions; the latter was indicated by large drops that fell from her eyes on the picture, and which followed each other over her cheek at such intervals as seemed to pronounce the grief too heavy to admit of the ordinary demonstrations of sorrow. Every movement of Isabella was marked by an enthusiasm that was peculiar to her nature, and every passion in its turn triumphed in her breast. The fury of the wind, as it whistled round the angles of the building, was in consonance with those feelings, and she rose and moved to a window of her apartment. Her figure was now hid from the view of Frances, who was about to rise and approach her guest, when tones of a thrilling melody chained her in breathless silence to the spot. The notes were wild, and the voice not powerful, but the execution exceeded anything that Frances had ever heard; and she stood, endeavoring to stifle

the sounds of her own gentle breathing, until the song was concluded. Isabella moved from the window as her last tones melted on the ear of her admiring listener, and, for the first time, her eye rested on the pallid face of the intruder. A glow of fire lighted the countenance of both at the same instant, and the blue eye of Frances met the brilliant black one of her guest for a single moment, and both fell in abashed confusion on the carpet; they advanced, however, until they met, and had taken each other's hand, before either ventured again to look her companion in the face.

"This sudden change in the weather, and perhaps the situation of my brother, have united to make me melancholy, Miss Wharton," said Isabella, in a low tone, and in a voice that trembled as she spoke.

"'Tis thought you have little to apprehend for your brother," said Frances, in the same embarrassed manner; "had you seen him when he was brought in by Major Dunwoodie —"

Frances paused, with a feeling of conscious shame, for which she could not account; and, in raising her eyes, she saw Isabella studying her countenance with an earnestness that again drove the blood tumultuously to her temples.

"You were speaking of Major Dunwoodie," said Isabella, faintly.

"He was with Captain Singleton."

"Do you know Dunwoodie? Have you seen him often?" Once more Frances ventured to look her guest in the face, and again she met the piercing eyes bent on her, as if to search her inmost heart. "Speak, Miss Wharton; is Major Dunwoodie known to you?"

"He is my relative," said Frances, appalled at the manner of the other.

"A relative!" echoed Miss Singleton; "in what degree? — speak, Miss Wharton, I conjure you to speak."

"Our parents were cousins," faintly replied Frances.

"And he is to be your husband!" said the stranger, impetuously.

Frances felt shocked, and all her pride awakened, by this direct attack upon her feelings, and she raised her eyes from the floor to her interrogator a little proudly, when the pale cheek and quivering lip of Isabella removed her resentment in a moment. "It is true! my conjecture is true: speak to me, Miss Wharton; I conjure you, in mercy to my feelings, to tell me — do you love Dunwoodie?" There was a plaintive earnestness in the voice of Miss Singleton that disarmed Frances of all resentment, and the only answer she could make was to hide her burning face between her hands, as she sank back in a chair to conceal her confusion.

Isabella paced the floor in silence for several minutes, until she had succeeded in conquering the violence of her feelings, when she approached the place where Frances yet sat, endeavoring to exclude the eyes of her companion from reading the shame expressed in her countenance, and, taking the hand of the other, she spoke with an evident effort at composure.

"Pardon me, Miss Wharton, if my ungovernable feelings have led me into impropriety; the powerful motive — the cruel reason —" she hesitated; Frances now raised her face, and their eyes once more met; they fell in each other's arms, and laid their burning cheeks together. The embrace was long — was ardent and sincere — but neither spoke; and on separating, Frances retired to her own room without further explanation.

CHAPTER XVI

THE position held by the corps of dragoons, we have already said, was a favorite place of halting with their commander. A cluster of some half-dozen small and dilapidated buildings formed what, from the circumstance of two roads intersecting each other at right angles, was called the village of the Four Corners. As usual, one of the most imposing of these edifices had been termed, in the language of the day, "a house of entertainment for man and beast." On a rough board suspended from the gallows-looking post that had supported the ancient sign was, however, written in red chalk, "Elizabeth Flanagan, her hotel," an ebullition of the wit of some of the idle wags of the corps. The matron, whose name had thus been exalted to an office of such unexpected dignity, ordinarily discharged the duties of a female sutler, washerwoman, and, to use the language of Katy Haynes, petticoat doctor to the troops. She was the widow of a soldier who had been killed in the service, and constantly migrated with the troops. It was seldom that they became stationary for two days at a time but the little cart of the bustling woman was seen driving into the encampment, loaded with such articles as she conceived would make her presence most welcome. With a celerity that seemed almost supernatural, Betty took up her ground and commenced her occupation. Sometimes the cart itself was her shop; at others the soldiers made her a rude shelter of such materials as offered; but on the present occasion she had seized on a vacant building, and, by dint of stuffing the dirty breeches and half-dried linen of the troopers into the broken windows to exclude the cold, which had now become severe, she formed

what she herself had pronounced to be "most illigant lodgings." The men were quartered in the adjacent barns, and the officers collected in the "Hotel Flanagan," as they facetiously called headquarters. Betty was well known to every trooper in the corps, could call each by his Christian or nickname, as best suited her fancy; and, although absolutely intolerable to all whom habit had not made familiar with her virtues, was a general favorite with these partisan warriors. Such was the mistress of the mansion, who, reckless of the cold northern blasts, showed her blooming face from the door of the building to welcome the arrival of her favorite, Captain Lawton, and his companion, her master in matters of surgery.

"Ah! by my hopes of promotion, my gentle Elizabeth, but you are welcome!" cried the trooper, as he threw himself from his saddle; "the sight of your fiery countenance is as cheering as a Christmas fire."

"Now sure, Captain Jack, ye's always full of your complimentaries," replied the sutler, taking the bridle of her customer; "but hurry in for the life of you, darling; the fences hereabouts are not so strong as in the Highlands, and there's that within will warm both sowl and body."

Lawton and his companion entered the building, and the first objects which met their eyes explained the hidden meaning of Betty's comfortable declaration. A long table, made of boards torn from the side of an outbuilding, was stretched through the middle of the largest apartment, or the barroom, and on it was a very scanty display of crockery ware. The steams of cookery arose from an adjoining kitchen, but the principal attraction was in a demijohn of fair proportions, which had been placed on high by Betty as the object most worthy of notice. Lawton soon learned that it was teeming with the real amber-colored juice of the grape, and had been sent from The Locusts, as an offering to Major Dunwoodie, from his friend Captain Wharton, of the royal army.



The arrangement of the table was a matter of but little concern to Mrs. Flanagan ; and Cæsar would have been sadly scandalized at witnessing the informality with which various dishes, each bearing a wonderful resemblance to the others, were placed before so many gentlemen of consideration. In taking their places at the board, the strictest attention was paid to precedence ; for, notwithstanding the freedom of manners which prevailed in the corps, the points of military etiquette were at all times observed, with something approaching to religious veneration. Most of the guests had been fasting too long to be in any degree fastidious in their appetites ; but the case was different with Captain Lawton ; he felt an unaccountable loathing at the exhibition of Betty's food, and could not refrain from making a few passing comments on the condition of the knives, and the clouded aspect of the plates.

"Try a drop of the gift," said Betty, soothingly, pouring a large allowance of the wine into a bowl, and drinking it off as taster to the corps. "Faith, 't is but a wishy-washy sort of stuff after all !"

"A song, a song from Captain Lawton !" cried two or three of the party in a breath, on observing the failure of some of the points of good-fellowship in the trooper ; "silence, for the song of Captain Lawton."

"Gentlemen," returned Lawton, his dark eyes swimming with the bumpers he had finished, though his head was as impenetrable as a post ; "I am not much of a nightingale, but, under the favor of your good wishes, I consent to comply with the demand."

"Silence, for Captain Lawton's song !" roared five or six at once ; when the trooper proceeded, in a fine full tone, to sing the words to a well-known bacchanalian air, several of his comrades helping him through the chorus with a fervor that shook the crazy edifice they were in.

A loud summons at the door of the building created a dead halt in the uproar, and the dragoons instinctively caught up

their arms, to be prepared for the worst. The door was opened, and the Skinners entered, dragging in the peddler, bending beneath the load of his pack.

"Which is Captain Lawton?" said the leader of the gang, gazing around him in some little astonishment.

"He waits your pleasure," said the trooper, dryly.

"Then here I deliver to your hands a condemned traitor; this is Harvey Birch, the peddler spy."

Lawton started as he looked his old acquaintance in the face, and, turning to the Skinner with a lowering look, he asked —

"And who are you, sir, that speak so freely of your neighbors? — But," bowing to Dunwoodie, "your pardon, sir; here is the commanding officer; to him you will please address yourself."

"No," said the man, sullenly, "it is to you I deliver the peddler, and from you I claim my reward."

"Are you Harvey Birch?" said Dunwoodie, advancing with an air of authority that instantly drove the Skinner to a corner of the room.

"I am," said Birch, proudly.

"And a traitor to your country," continued the major, with sternness; "do you know that I should be justified in ordering your execution this night?"

"'Tis not the will of God to call a soul so hastily to his presence," said the peddler, with solemnity.

"You speak truth," said Dunwoodie; "and a few brief hours shall be added to your life. But as your offense is most odious to a soldier, so it will be sure to meet with the soldier's vengeance; you die to-morrow."

"'Tis as God wills."

"I have spent many a good hour to entrap the villain," said the Skinner, advancing a little from his corner, "and I hope you will give me a certificate that will entitle us to the reward; 't was promised to be paid in gold."

"Major Dunwoodie," said the officer of the day, entering the room, "the patrols report a house to be burned near yesterday's battleground."

"'T was the hut of the peddler," muttered the leader of the gang; "we have not left him a shingle for shelter; I should have burned it months ago, but I wanted his shed for a trap to catch the sly fox in."

"You seem a most ingenious patriot," said Lawton. "Major Dunwoodie, I second the request of this worthy gentleman, and crave the office of bestowing the reward on him and his fellows."

"Take it;—and you, miserable man, prepare for that fate which will surely befall you before the setting of to-morrow's sun."

"Life offers but little to tempt me with," said Harvey, slowly raising his eyes, and gazing wildly at the strange faces in the apartment.

"Come, worthy children of America!" said Lawton, "follow, and receive your reward."

The gang eagerly accepted the invitation, and followed the captain towards the quarters assigned to his troop. Dunwoodie paused a moment, from reluctance to triumph over a fallen foe, before he proceeded.

"You have already been tried, Harvey Birch; and the truth has proved you to be an enemy too dangerous to the liberties of America to be suffered to live."

"The truth!" echoed the peddler, starting, and raising himself in a manner that disregarded the weight of his pack.

"Ay! the truth; you were charged with loitering near the continental army, to gain intelligence of its movements, and, by communicating them to the enemy, to enable him to frustrate the intentions of Washington."

"Will Washington say so, think you?"

"Doubtless he would; even the justice of Washington condemns you."

"No, no, no," cried the peddler, in a voice and with a manner that startled Dunwoodie; "Washington can see beyond the hollow views of pretended patriots. Has he not risked his all on the cast of a die? If a gallows is ready for me, was there not one for him also? No, no, no, no — Washington would never say, 'Lead him to a gallows.'"

"Have you anything, wretched man, to urge to the commander in chief why you should not die?" said the major, recovering from the surprise created by the manner of the other.

Birch trembled, for violent emotions were contending in his bosom. His face assumed the ghastly paleness of death, and his hand drew a box of tin from the folds of his shirt; he opened it, showing by the act that it contained a small piece of paper; on this document his eye was for an instant fixed — he had already held it towards Dunwoodie, when suddenly withdrawing his hand, he exclaimed —

"No — it dies with me; I know the conditions of my service, and will not purchase life with their forfeiture — it dies with me."

"Deliver that paper, and you may possibly find favor," cried Dunwoodie, expecting a discovery of importance to the cause.

"It dies with me," repeated Birch, a flush passing over his pallid features, and lighting them with extraordinary brilliancy.

"Seize the traitor!" cried the major, "and wrest the secret from his hands."

The order was immediately obeyed; but the movements of the peddler were too quick; in an instant he swallowed the paper. The officers paused in astonishment; but the surgeon cried eagerly —

"Hold him, while I administer an emetic."

"Forbear!" said Dunwoodie, beckoning him back with his hand; "if his crime is great, so will his punishment be heavy."

"Lead on," cried the peddler, dropping his pack from his shoulders, and advancing towards the door with a manner of incomprehensible dignity.

"Whither?" asked Dunwoodie, in amazement.

"To the gallows."

"No," said the major, recoiling in horror at his own justice. "My duty requires that I order you to be executed, but surely not so hastily; take until nine to-morrow to prepare for the awful change."

Dunwoodie whispered his orders in the ear of a subaltern, and motioned to the peddler to withdraw. The interruption caused by this scene prevented further enjoyment around the table, and the officers dispersed to their several places of rest. In a short time the only noise to be heard was the heavy tread of the sentinel as he paced the frozen ground in front of the Hotel Flanagan.

CHAPTER XVII

THE officer to whose keeping Dunwoodie had committed the peddler transferred his charge to the custody of the regular sergeant of the guard. The gift of Captain Wharton had not been lost on the youthful lieutenant; and a certain dancing motion that had taken possession of objects before his eyes gave him warning of the necessity of recruiting nature by sleep. After admonishing the noncommissioned guardian of Harvey to omit no watchfulness in securing the prisoner, the youth wrapped himself in his cloak, and, stretched on a bench before a fire, soon found the repose he needed. A rude shed extended the whole length of the rear of the building, and from off one of its ends had been partitioned a small apartment, that was intended as a repository for many of the lesser implements of husbandry. The lawless times had, however, occasioned its being stripped of everything of value; and the searching eyes of Betty Flanagan selected this spot, on her arrival, as the storehouse for her movables, and a sanctuary for her person. The spare arms and baggage of the corps had also been deposited here; and the united treasures were placed under the eye of the sentinel who paraded the shed as a guardian of the rear of the headquarters. A second soldier, who was stationed near the house to protect the horses of the officers, could command a view of the outside of the apartment; and, as it was without window or outlet of any kind, excepting its door, the considerate sergeant thought this the most befitting place in which to deposit his prisoner until the moment of his execution. Several inducements urged Sergeant Hollister to this determination, among which was

the absence of the washerwoman, who lay before the kitchen fire, dreaming that the corps was attacking a party of the enemy, and mistaking the noise that proceeded from her own nose for the bugles of the Virginians sounding the charge. Another was the peculiar opinions that the veteran entertained of life and death, and by which he was distinguished in the corps as a man of most exemplary piety and holiness of life. The sergeant was more than fifty years of age, and for half that period he had borne arms. The constant recurrence of sudden deaths before his eyes had produced an effect on him differing greatly from that which was the usual moral consequence of such scenes; and he had become not only the most steady, but the most trustworthy soldier in his troop. Captain Lawton had rewarded his fidelity by making him its orderly.

Followed by Birch, the sergeant proceeded in silence to the door of the intended prison, and throwing it open with one hand, he held a lantern with the other to light the peddler to his prison. Seating himself on a cask, that contained some of Betty's favorite beverage, the sergeant motioned to Birch to occupy another, in the same manner. The lantern was placed on the floor, when the dragoon, after looking his prisoner steadily in the face, observed —

"You look as if you would meet death like a man; and I have brought you to a spot where you can tranquilly arrange your thoughts, and be quiet and undisturbed."

"'Tis a fearful place to prepare for the last change in," said Harvey, gazing around his little prison with a vacant eye.

"Why, for the matter of that," returned the veteran, "it can reckon but little, in the great account, where a man parades his thoughts for the last review, so that he finds them fit to pass the muster of another world. I have a small book here, which I make it a point to read a little in, whenever we are about to engage, and I find it a great strengthener

in time of need." While speaking, he took a Bible from his pocket and offered it to the peddler. Birch received the volume with habitual reverence; but there was an abstracted air about him, and a wandering of the eye, that induced his companion to think that alarm was getting the mastery of the peddler's feelings; accordingly he proceeded in what he conceived to be the offices of consolation.

"If anything lies heavy on your mind, now is the best time to get rid of it—if you have done any wrong to any one, I promise you, on the word of an honest dragoon, to lend you a helping hand to see them righted."

"There are few who have not done so," said the peddler, turning his vacant gaze once more on his companion.

"True—'t is natural to sin; but it sometimes happens that a man does what at other times he may be sorry for. One would not wish to die with any very heavy sin on his conscience, after all."

Harvey had by this time thoroughly examined the place in which he was to pass the night, and saw no means of escape. But as hope is ever the last feeling to desert the human breast, the peddler gave the dragoon more of his attention, fixing on his sunburned features such searching looks that Sergeant Hollister lowered his eyes before the wild expression which he met in the gaze of his prisoner.

"I have been taught to lay the burden of my sins at the feet of my Saviour," replied the peddler.

"Why, yes, all that is well enough," returned the other; "but justice should be done while there is opportunity. There have been stirring times in this country since the war began, and many have been deprived of their rightful goods. I oftentimes find it hard to reconcile even my lawful plunder to a tender conscience."

"These hands," said the peddler, stretching forth his meager, bony fingers, "have spent years in toil, but not a moment in pilfering."

"It is well that it is so," said the honest-hearted soldier, "and, no doubt, you now feel it a great consolation. There are three great sins, that, if a man can keep his conscience clear of, why, by the mercy of God, he may hope to pass muster with the saints in heaven: they are stealing, murdering, and desertion."

"Thank God! I have never yet taken the life of a fellow creature. I never was a soldier, therefore never could desert," said the peddler, resting his face on his hand in a melancholy attitude.

"Why, desertion consists of more than quitting your colors, though that is certainly the worst kind; a man may desert his country in the hour of need."

Birch buried his face in both his hands, and his whole frame shook; the sergeant regarded him closely, but good feelings soon got the better of his antipathies, and he continued more mildly —

"But still that is a sin which I think may be forgiven if sincerely repented of; and it matters but little when or how a man dies, so that he dies like a Christian and a man. I recommend you to say your prayers, and then to get some rest, in order that you may do both. There is no hope of your being pardoned; for Colonel Singleton has sent down the most positive orders to take your life whenever we met you. No — no — nothing can save you."

"You say the truth," cried Birch. "It is now too late; I have destroyed my only safeguard. But *he* will do my memory justice at least."

"What safeguard?" asked the sergeant, with awakened curiosity.

"'T is nothing," replied the peddler, recovering his natural manner, and lowering his face to avoid the earnest looks of his companion.

"And who is he?"

"No one," added Harvey, anxious to say no more.

"Nothing, and no one, can avail but little now," said the sergeant, rising to go; "lay yourself on the blanket of Mrs. Flanagan and get a little sleep; I will call you betimes in the morning; and, from the bottom of my soul, I wish I could be of some service to you, for I dislike greatly to see a man hung up like a dog."

"Then *you* might save me from this ignominious death," said Birch, springing on his feet, and catching the dragoon by the arm— "And, oh! what will I not give you in reward!"

"In what manner?" asked the sergeant, looking at him in surprise.

"See," said the peddler, producing several guineas from his person; "these are nothing to what I will give you if you will assist me to escape."

"Were you the man whose picture is on the gold, I would not listen to such a crime," said the trooper, throwing the money on the floor with contempt. "Go—go—poor wretch, and make your peace with God; for it is he only that can be of service to you now."

The sergeant took up the lantern, and, with some indignation in his manner, he left the peddler to sorrowful meditations on his approaching fate. Birch sank, in momentary despair, on the pallet of Betty, while his guardian proceeded to give the necessary instructions to the sentinels for his safe-keeping.

Hollister concluded his injunctions to the man in the shed, by saying, "Your life will depend on his not escaping. Let none enter or quit the room till morning."

"But," said the trooper, "my orders are, to let the washer-woman pass in and out as she pleases."

"Well, let her then; but be careful that this wily peddler does not get out in the folds of her petticoats." He then continued his walk, giving similar orders to each of the sentinels near the spot.

For some time after the departure of the sergeant, silence prevailed within the solitary prison of the peddler, until the dragoon at his door heard his loud breathings, which soon rose into the regular cadence of one in a deep sleep. The man continued walking his post, musing on an indifference to life which could allow nature its customary rest, even on the threshold of the grave. Harvey Birch had, however, been a name too long held in detestation by every man in the corps to suffer any feelings of commiseration to mingle with these reflections of the sentinel; for, notwithstanding the consideration and kindness manifested by the sergeant, there probably was not another man of his rank in the whole party who would have discovered equal benevolence to the prisoner, or who would not have imitated the veteran in rejecting the bribe, although probably from a less worthy motive. There was something of disappointed vengeance in the feelings of the man who watched the door of the room, on finding his prisoner enjoying a sleep of which he himself was deprived, and at his exhibiting such obvious indifference to the utmost penalty that military rigor could inflict on all his treason to the cause of liberty and America. More than once he felt prompted to disturb the repose of the peddler by taunts and revilings; but the discipline he was under, and a secret sense of shame at the brutality of the act, held him in subjection.

His meditations were, however, soon interrupted by the appearance of the washerwoman, who came staggering through the door that communicated with the kitchen, muttering execrations against the servants of the officers, who, by their waggery, had disturbed her slumbers before the fire. The sentinel understood enough of her maledictions to comprehend the case; but all his efforts to enter into conversation with the enraged woman were useless, and he suffered her to enter her room without explaining that it contained another inmate. The noise of her huge frame falling on the bed

was succeeded by a silence that was soon interrupted by the renewed respiration of the peddler, and within a few minutes Harvey continued to breathe aloud, as if no interruption had occurred. The relief arrived at this moment. The sentinel, who felt nettled at the contempt of the peddler, after communicating his orders, while he was retiring, exclaimed to his successor —

"You may keep yourself warm by dancing, John ; the peddler spy has tuned his fiddle, you hear, and it will not be long before Betty will strike up, in her turn."

The joke was followed by a general laugh from the party, who marched on in the performance of their duty. At this instant the door of the prison was opened, and Betty reappeared, staggering back again toward her former quarters.

"Stop," said the sentinel, catching her by her clothes ; "are you sure the spy is not in your pocket?"

"Can't you hear the rascal snoring in my room, you dirty blackguard?" sputtered Betty, her whole frame shaking with rage ; "and is it so ye would sarve a dacent famale, that a man must be put to sleep in the room wid her, ye rapsallion?"

"Pooh ! do you mind a fellow who's to be hanged in the morning ? You see he sleeps already ; to-morrow he'll take a longer nap."

"Hands off, ye villain !" cried the washerwoman, relinquishing a small bottle that the trooper had succeeded in wresting from her. "But I'll go to Captain Jack, and know if it's orders to put a hang-gallows spy in my room, you t'ief !"

"Silence, old Jezebel !" said the fellow with a laugh, taking the bottle from his mouth to breathe, "or you will wake the gentleman. Would you disturb a man in his last sleep?"

"I'll awake Captain Jack, you reprobate villain, and bring him here to see me righted; he will punish ye all for imposing on a dacent widowed body, you marauder!"

With these words, which only extorted a laugh from the sentinel, Betty staggered round the end of the building, and made the best of her way towards the quarters of her favorite, Captain John Lawton, in search of redress. Neither the officer nor the woman, however, appeared during the night, and nothing further occurred to disturb the repose of the peddler, who, to the astonishment of the different sentinels, continued by his breathing to manifest how little the gallows could affect his slumbers.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE Skinners followed Captain Lawton with alacrity towards the quarters occupied by the troop of that gentleman. The barns were occupied by the men of the troop, while the horses were arranged under the long sheds which protected the yard from the cold north wind. The latter were quietly eating, with saddles on their backs and bridles thrown on their necks, ready to be bitted and mounted at the shortest warning. Lawton excused himself for a moment, and entered his quarters. He soon returned, holding in his hand one of the common stable lanterns, and led the way towards a large orchard that surrounded the buildings on three sides. The gang followed the trooper in silence.

Approaching the captain, the Skinner inquired, with a little of the importance of a politician —

“Do you think the colonies will finally get the better of the king?”

“Get the better!” echoed the captain, with impetuosity — then checking himself, he continued, “no doubt they will. If the French will give us arms and money, we can drive out the royal troops in six months.”

“Well, so I hope we shall soon; and then we shall have a free government, and we, who fight for it, will get our reward.”

“Oh!” cried Lawton, “your claims will be indisputable, while all these vile Tories who live at home peaceably to take care of their farms will be held in the contempt they merit. You have no farm, I suppose?”

“Not yet, but it will go hard if I do not find one before the peace is made.”

"Right; study your own interests, and you study the interests of your country; press the point of your own services, and rail at the Tories, and I'll bet my spurs against a rusty nail that you get to be a county clerk at least."

"Don't you think Paulding's party were fools in not letting the royal adjutant general escape?" said the man, thrown off his guard by the freedom of the captain's manner.

"Fools!" cried Lawton, with a bitter laugh; "ay, fools indeed; King George would have paid them better, for he is richer. He would have made them gentlemen for their lives. But, thank God! there is a pervading spirit in the people that seems miraculous. Men who have nothing act as if the wealth of the Indies depended on their fidelity; all are not villains like yourself, or we should have been slaves to England years ago."

"How!" exclaimed the Skinner, starting back, and dropping his musket to the level of the other's breast; "am I betrayed, and are you my enemy?"

"Miscreant!" shouted Lawton, his saber ringing in its steel scabbard as he struck the musket of the fellow from his hands, "offer but again to point your gun at me and I'll cleave you to the middle."

"And you will not pay us, then, Captain Lawton?" said the Skinner, trembling in every joint, for just then he saw a party of mounted dragoons silently encircling the whole party.

"Oh! pay you—yes, you shall have the full measure of your reward. There is the money that Colonel Singleton sent down for the captors of the spy," throwing a bag of guineas with disdain at the other's feet. "But ground your arms, you rascals, and see that the money is truly told."

The intimidated band did as they were ordered; and while they were eagerly employed in this pleasing avocation, a few of Lawton's men privately knocked the flints out of their muskets.

"Well," cried the impatient captain, "is it right? Have you the promised reward?"

"There is just the money," said the leader; "and we will now go to our homes, with your permission."

"Hold! so much to redeem our promise — now for justice; we pay you for taking a spy, but we punish you for burning, robbing, and murdering. Seize them, my lads, and give each of them the law of Moses — forty, save one."

This command was given to no unwilling listeners; and in the twinkling of an eye the Skinners were stripped and fastened, by the halters of the party, to as many of the apple trees as were necessary to furnish one to each of the gang. Swords were quickly drawn, and fifty branches were cut from the trees, like magic; from these were selected a few of the most supple of the twigs, and a willing dragoon was soon found to wield each of the weapons. Captain Lawton gave the word, humanely cautioning his men not to exceed the discipline prescribed by the Mosaic law, and the uproar of Babel commenced in the orchard. The cries of the leader were easily to be distinguished above those of his men; a circumstance which might be accounted for by Captain Lawton's reminding his corrector that he had to deal with an officer, and he should remember and pay him unusual honor. The flagellation was executed with great neatness and dispatch, and it was distinguished by no irregularity, excepting that none of the disciplinarians began to count until they had tried their whips by a dozen or more blows, by the way, as they said themselves, of finding out the proper places to strike. As soon as this summary operation was satisfactorily completed, Lawton directed his men to leave the Skinners to replace their own clothes, and to mount their horses; for they were a party who had been detached for the purpose of patrolling lower down in the county.

"You see, my friend," said the captain to the leader of the Skinners, after he had prepared himself to depart, "I

can cover you to some purpose, when necessary. If we meet often, you will be covered with scars, which, if not very honorable, will at least be merited."

The fellow made no reply. He was busy with his musket, and hastening his comrades to march; when, everything being ready, they proceeded sullenly towards some rocks at no great distance, which were overhung by a deep wood. The moon was just rising, and the group of dragoons could easily be distinguished where they had been left. Suddenly turning, the whole gang leveled their pieces and drew the triggers. The action was noticed, and the snapping of the locks was heard by the soldiers, who returned their futile attempt with a laugh of derision, the captain crying aloud—

"Ah! rascals, I knew you, and have taken away your flints."

"You should have taken away that in my pouch too," shouted the leader, firing his gun in the next instant. The bullet grazed the ear of Lawton, who laughed as he shook his head, saying, "A miss was as good as a mile." One of the dragoons had seen the preparations of the Skinner—who had been left alone by the rest of his gang, as soon as they had made their abortive attempt at revenge—and was in the act of plunging his spurs into his horse as the fellow fired. The distance to the rocks was but small, yet the speed of the horse compelled the leader to abandon both money and musket, to effect his escape. The soldier returned with his prizes, and offered them to the acceptance of his captain; but Lawton rejected them, telling the man to retain them himself, until the rascal appeared in person to claim his property. It would have been a business of no small difficulty for any tribunal then existing in the new states to have enforced a restitution of the money; for it was shortly after most equitably distributed, by the hands of Sergeant Hollister, among a troop of horse. The patrol departed, and the captain slowly returned to his quarters,

with an intention of retiring to rest. A figure moving rapidly among the trees, in the direction of the wood whither the Skinners had retired, caught his eye, and, wheeling on his heel, the cautious partisan approached it, and, to his astonishment, saw the washerwoman at that hour of the night, and in such a place.

"What, Betty! walking in your sleep, or dreaming while awake?" cried the trooper; "are you not afraid of meeting with the ghost of your old cow in this her favorite pasture?"

"Ah, sure, Captain Jack," returned the sutler in her native accent, and reeling in a manner that made it difficult for her to raise her head, "it's not Jenny, or her ghost, that I'm saaking, but some yarbs for the wounded. And it's the vartue of the rising moon, as it jist touches them, that I want. They grow under yon rocks, and I must hasten, or the charm will lose its power."

"Fool, you are fitter for your pallet than for wandering among those rocks; a fall from one of them would break your bones; besides, the Skinners have fled to those heights, and should you fall in with them, they would revenge on you a sound flogging they have just received from me. Better return, old woman, and finish your nap; we march in the morning."

Betty disregarded his advice, and continued her devious route to the hillside. For an instant, as Lawton mentioned the Skinners, she had paused, but immediately resuming her course, she was soon out of sight among the trees.

As the captain entered his quarters, the sentinel at the door inquired if he had met Mrs. Flanagan, and added that she had passed there, filling the air with threats against her tormentors at the "Hotel," and inquiring for the captain in search of redress. Lawton heard the man in astonishment—appeared struck with a new idea—walked several yards towards the orchard, and returned again; for several

minutes he paced rapidly to and fro before the door of the house, and then hastily entering it, he threw himself on a bed in his clothes, and was soon in a profound sleep.

In the meantime the gang of marauders had successfully gained the summit of the rocks, and, scattering in every direction, they buried themselves in the depths of the wood. Finding, however, there was no pursuit, which indeed would have been impracticable for horse, the leader ventured to call his band together with a whistle, and in a short time he succeeded in collecting his discomfited party at a point where they had but little to apprehend from any enemy.

"Well," said one of the fellows, while a fire was lighting to protect them against the air, which was becoming severely cold, "there is an end to our business in Westchester. The Virginia horse will soon make the county too hot to hold us."

Their hunger being appeased, and many of their garments thrown aside for the better opportunity of dressing their wounds, the gang began to plot measures of revenge. An hour was spent in this manner, and various expedients were proposed; but as they all depended on personal prowess for their success, and were attended by great danger, they were of course rejected. There was no possibility of approaching the troops by surprise, their vigilance being ever on the watch; and the hope of meeting Captain Lawton, away from his men, was equally forlorn, for the trooper was constantly engaged in his duty, and his movements were so rapid that any opportunity of meeting with him at all must depend greatly on accident. Besides, it was by no means certain that such an interview would result happily for themselves. The cunning of the trooper was notorious; and rough and broken as was Westchester, the fearless partisan was known to take desperate leaps, and stone walls were but slight impediments to the

charges of the Southern horse. Gradually, the conversation took another direction, until the gang determined on a plan which should both revenge themselves and, at the same time, offer some additional stimulus to their exertions. The whole business was accurately discussed, the time fixed, and the manner adopted; in short, nothing was wanting to the previous arrangement for this deed of villainy, when they were aroused by a voice calling aloud —

“This way, Captain Jack — here are the rascals ating by a fire — this way, and murder the t’ieves where they sit — quick, lave your horses and shoot your pistols!”

This terrific summons was enough to disturb all the philosophy of the gang. Springing to their feet, they rushed deeper into the wood, and having already agreed upon a place of rendezvous previously to their intended expedition, they dispersed towards the four quarters of the heavens. Certain sounds and different voices were heard calling on each other, but as the marauders were well trained to speed of foot, they were soon lost in the distance.

It was not long before Betty Flanagan emerged from the darkness, and very coolly took possession of what the Skinners had left behind them; namely, food and divers articles of dress. The washerwoman deliberately seated herself, and made a meal with great apparent satisfaction. For an hour she sat with her head upon her hand, in deep musing; then she gathered together such articles of the clothes as seemed to suit her fancy, and retired into the wood, leaving the fire to throw its glimmering light on the adjacent rocks, until its last brand died away, and the place was abandoned to solitude and darkness.

CHAPTER XIX

WHILE his comrades were sleeping, in perfect forgetfulness of their hardships and dangers, the slumbers of Dunwoodie were broken and unquiet. After spending a night of restlessness, he arose, unrefreshed, from the rude bed where he had thrown himself in his clothes, and, without awaking any of the group around him, he wandered into the open air in search of relief. The hour had not yet arrived when he intended moving from his present position; and, willing to allow his warriors all the refreshment that circumstances would permit, he strolled towards the scene of the Skinners' punishment, musing upon the embarrassments of his situation, and uncertain how he should reconcile his sense of duty with his love. Although Dunwoodie himself placed the most implicit reliance on the captain's purity of intention, he was by no means assured that a board of officers would be equally credulous; and, independently of all feelings of private regard, he felt certain that with the execution of Henry would be destroyed all hopes of a union with his sister. He had dispatched an officer, the preceding evening, to Colonel Singleton, who was in command of the advance posts, reporting the capture of the British captain, and, after giving his own opinion of his innocence, requesting orders as to the manner in which he was to dispose of his prisoner. These orders might be expected every hour, and his uneasiness increased, in proportion as the moment approached when his friend might be removed from his protection. In this disturbed state of mind the major wandered through the orchard, and was stopped in his walk by arriving at the base of those rocks

which had protected the Skinners in their flight before he was conscious whither his steps had carried him. He was about to turn, and retrace his path to his quarters, when he was startled by a voice, bidding him —

“Stand or die!”

Dunwoodie turned in amazement, and beheld the figure of a man placed at a little distance above him on a shelving rock, with a musket leveled at himself. The light was not yet sufficiently powerful to reach the recesses of that gloomy spot, and a second look was necessary before he discovered, to his astonishment, that the peddler stood before him. Comprehending, in an instant, the danger of his situation, and disdaining to implore mercy or to retreat, had the latter been possible, the youth cried firmly —

“If I am to be murdered, fire! I will never become your prisoner.”

“No, Major Dunwoodie,” said Birch, lowering his musket, “it is neither my intention to capture nor to slay.”

“What then would you have, mysterious being?” said Dunwoodie, hardly able to persuade himself that the form he saw was not a creature of the imagination.

“Your good opinion,” answered the peddler, with emotion; “I would wish all good men to judge me with lenity.”

“To you it must be indifferent what may be the judgment of men; for you seem to be beyond the reach of their sentence.”

“God spares the lives of his servants to his own time,” said the peddler, solemnly; “a few hours ago I was your prisoner, and threatened with the gallows; now you are mine; but, Major Dunwoodie, you are free. There are men abroad who would treat you less kindly. Of what service would that sword be to you against my weapon and a steady hand? Take the advice of one who has never harmed you, and who never will. Do not trust yourself in the skirts of any wood unless in company and mounted.”



"And have you comrades, who have assisted you to escape, and who are less generous than yourself?"

"No — no, I am alone truly; none know me but my God and *him*."

"And who?" asked the major, with an interest he could not control.

"None," continued the peddler, recovering his composure. "But such is not your case, Major Dunwoodie; you are young and happy; there are those that are dear to you, and such are not far away; danger is near them you love most — danger within and without; double your watchfulness, strengthen your patrols, and be silent. With your opinion of me, should I tell you more, you would suspect an ambush. But remember and guard them you love best."

The peddler discharged the musket in the air and threw it at the feet of his astonished auditor. When surprise and the smoke allowed Dunwoodie to look again on the rock where he had stood, the spot was vacant.

The youth was aroused from the stupor which had been created by this strange scene by the trampling of horses and the sound of the bugles. A patrol was drawn to the spot by the report of the musket, and the alarm had been given to the corps. Without entering into any explanation with his men, the major returned quickly to his quarters, where he found the whole squadron under arms, in battle array, impatiently awaiting the appearance of their leader. The officer whose duty it was to superintend such matters had directed a party to lower the sign of the Hotel Flanagan, and the post was already arranged for the execution of the spy. On hearing from the major that the musket was discharged by himself, and was probably one of those dropped by the Skinners (for by this time Dunwoodie had learned the punishment inflicted by Lawton, but chose to conceal his own interview with Birch), his officers suggested the propriety of executing their prisoner before they marched.

Unable to believe that all he had seen was not a dream, Dunwoodie, followed by many of his officers, and preceded by Sergeant Hollister, went to the place which was supposed to contain the peddler.

"Well, sir," said the major to the sentinel who guarded the door, "I trust you have your prisoner in safety."

"He is yet asleep," replied the man, "and he makes such a noise I could hardly hear the bugles sound the alarm."

"Open the door and bring him forth."

The order was obeyed; but, to the utter amazement of the honest veteran who entered the prison, he found the room in no little disorder—the coat of the peddler where his body ought to have been, and part of the wardrobe of Betty scattered in disorder on the floor. The washerwoman herself occupied the pallet, in profound mental oblivion, clad as when last seen, excepting a little black bonnet, which she so constantly wore that it was commonly thought she made it perform the double duty of both day and night cap. The noise of their entrance and the exclamations of the party awoke the woman.

"Is it the breakfast that's wanting?" said Betty, rubbing her eyes; "faith, ye look as if ye would ate myself—but patience a little, darlings, and ye'll see sich a fry as never was."

"Fry!" echoed the sergeant, forgetful of his religious philosophy and the presence of his officers; "we'll have you roasted, Jezebel! You've helped that confounded peddler to escape."

"Jezebel back ag'in in your teeth, and peddler too, Mister Sargeant!" cried Betty, who was easily roused; "what have I to do with peddlers, or escapes? I might have been a peddler's lady, and worn my silks, if I'd had Sawny M'Twill, instead of tagging at the heels of a parcel of dragooning rascallions, who don't know how to trate a lone body with dacency."

"The fellow has left my Bible," said the veteran, taking the book from the floor; "instead of spending his time in reading it to prepare for his end, like a good Christian, he has been busy in laboring to escape."

"And who would stay and be hanged like a dog?" cried Betty, beginning to comprehend the case; "'t is n't everyone that's born to meet with sich an ind—like yourself, Mister Hollister."

"Silence!" said Dunwoodie. "This must be inquired into closely, gentlemen; there is no outlet but the door, and there he could not pass unless the sentinel connived at his escape, or was asleep on his post. Call up the guard."

As these men were not paraded, curiosity had already drawn them to the place, and they one and all, with the exception of him before mentioned, denied that any person had passed out. The individual in question acknowledged that Betty had gone by him, but pleaded his orders in justification.

"You lie, you t'ief—you lie!" shouted Betty, who had impatiently listened to his exculpation; "would ye slanderize a lone woman by saying she walks a camp at midnight? Here have I been slaaping the long night, swaatly as the sucking babe."

"Here, sir," said the sergeant, turning respectfully to Dunwoodie, "is something written in my Bible that was not in it before; for having no family to record, I would never suffer any scribbling in the sacred book."

One of the officers read aloud, "These certify, that if suffered to get free, it is by God's help alone, to whose divine aid I humbly riccommind myself. I'm forced to take the woman's clothes, but in her pocket is a ricompinse.—Witness my hand—Harvey Birch."

"What!" roared Betty, "has the t'ief robbed a lone woman of her all? Hang him; catch him and hang him, major, if there's law or justice in the land."

"Examine your pocket," said one of the youngsters, who was enjoying the scene, careless of the consequences.

"Ah! faith," cried the washerwoman, producing a guinea, "but he is a jewel of a peddler! Long life and a brisk trade to him, say I; he is wilcome to the duds, and if he is ever hanged, many a bigger rogue will go free."

Dunwoodie turned to leave the apartment, and he saw Captain Lawton standing with folded arms, contemplating the scene in profound silence. His manner, so different from his usual impetuosity and zeal, struck his commander as singular. Their eyes met, and they walked together for a few minutes in close conversation, when Dunwoodie returned, and dismissed the guard to their place of rendezvous. Sergeant Hollister, however, continued along with Betty, who, having found none of her vestments disturbed but such as the guinea more than paid for, was in high good humor.

During the breakfast several expresses arrived, one of which brought intelligence of the actual force and destination of the enemy's expedition that was out on the Hudson; and another, orders to send Captain Wharton to the first post above, under the escort of a body of dragoons. These last instructions, or rather commands, for they admitted of no departure from their letter, completed the sum of Dunwoodie's uneasiness. In obedience to the commands of his superior, an officer, with a small party, was sent to the cottage to conduct Henry Wharton to the place directed; and the gentleman who was intrusted with the execution of the order was charged with a letter from Dunwoodie to his friend, containing the most cheering assurances of his safety, as well as the strongest pledges of his own unceasing exertions in his favor. Lawton was left with part of his own troop, in charge of the few wounded; and as soon as the men were refreshed, the encampment broke up, the main body marching towards the Hudson. Dunwoodie repeated

his injunctions to Captain Lawton again and again—dwelt on every word that had fallen from the peddler, and canvased, in every possible manner that his ingenuity could devise, the probable meaning of his mysterious warnings, until no excuse remained for delaying his own departure. Suddenly recollecting, however, that no directions had been given for the disposal of Colonel Wellmere, instead of following the rear of the column, the major yielded to his desires, and turned down the road which led to The Locusts. The horse of Dunwoodie was fleet as the wind, and scarcely a minute seemed to have passed before he gained sight, from an eminence, of the lonely vale, and as he was plunging into the bottom lands that formed its surface, he caught a glimpse of Henry Wharton and his escort, at a distance, defiling through a pass which led to the posts above. This sight added to the speed of the anxious youth, who now turned the angle of the hill that opened to the valley, and came suddenly on the object of his search. Frances had followed the party which guarded her brother; and as they vanished from her sight, she felt deserted by all that she most prized in this world. The unaccountable absence of Dunwoodie, with the shock of parting from Henry under such circumstances, had entirely subdued her fortitude, and she had sunk on a stone by the roadside, sobbing as if her heart would break. Dunwoodie sprang from his charger, threw the reins over the neck of the animal, and in a moment he was by the side of the weeping girl.

"Frances—my own Frances!" he exclaimed, "why this distress? Let not the situation of your brother create any alarm. As soon as the duty I am now on is completed, I will hasten to the feet of Washington, and beg his release. The Father of his Country will never deny such a boon to one of his favorite pupils."

"Major Dunwoodie, for your interest in behalf of my poor brother, I thank you," said the trembling girl, drying her

eyes, and rising with dignity; "but such language addressed to me, surely, is improper."

"Improper! are you not mine — by the consent of your father — your aunt — your brother — nay, by your own consent, my sweet Frances?"

"I wish not, Major Dunwoodie, to interfere with the prior claims that any other lady may have to your affections," said Frances, struggling to speak with firmness.

"None other, I swear by Heaven, none other has any claim on me!" cried Dunwoodie, with fervor; "you alone are mistress of my inmost soul."

"You have practiced so much, and so successfully, Major Dunwoodie, that it is no wonder you excel in deceiving the credulity of my sex," returned Frances, attempting a smile, which the tremulousness of her muscles smothered in its birth.

"Am I a villain, Miss Wharton, that you receive me with such language? When have I ever deceived you, Frances? Who has practiced in this manner on your purity of heart?"

"Why has not Major Dunwoodie honored the dwelling of his intended father with his presence lately? Did he forget it contained one friend on a bed of sickness and another in deep distress? Has it escaped his memory that it held his intended wife? Or is he fearful of meeting more than one that can lay a claim to that title? Oh, Peyton — Peyton, how have I been deceived in you! with the foolish credulity of my youth, I thought you all that was brave, noble, generous, and loyal."

"Frances, I see how you have deceived yourself," cried Dunwoodie, his face in a glow of fire; "you do me injustice; I swear by all that is most dear to me that you do me injustice."

"Swear not, Major Dunwoodie," interrupted Frances, her fine countenance lighting with the luster of womanly pride; "the time is gone by for me to credit oaths."

"Miss Wharton, would you have me a coxcomb — make me contemptible in my own eyes, by boasting with the hope of raising myself in your estimation?"

"Flatter not yourself that the task is so easy, sir," returned Frances, moving towards the cottage; "we converse together in private for the last time; — but — possibly — my father would welcome my mother's kinsman."

"No, Miss Wharton, I cannot enter his dwelling now; I should act in a manner unworthy of myself. You drive me from you, Frances, in despair. I am going on desperate service, and may not live to return. Should fortune prove severe, at least do my memory justice; remember that the last breathings of my soul will be for your happiness." So saying, he had already placed his foot in the stirrup, but his youthful mistress turning on him an eye that pierced his soul, arrested the action.

"Peyton — Major Dunwoodie," she said, "can you ever forget the sacred cause in which you are enlisted? Duty both to your God and to your country forbids you doing anything rashly. The latter has need of your services; besides —" But her voice became choked, and she was unable to proceed.

"Besides what?" echoed the youth, springing to her side, and offering to take her hand in his own. Frances having, however, recovered herself, coldly repulsed him and continued her walk homeward.

"Is this our parting?" cried Dunwoodie, in agony; "am I a wretch, that you treat me so cruelly? You have never loved me, and wish to conceal your own fickleness by accusations that you will not explain."

Frances stopped short in her walk, and turned on him a look of so much purity and feeling that, heartstricken, Dunwoodie would have knelt at her feet for pardon; but motioning him for silence, she once more spoke —

"Hear me, Major Dunwoodie, for the last time; it is a bitter knowledge when we first discover our own inferiority;

but it is a truth that I have lately learned. Against you I bring no charges — make no accusations ; no, not willingly in my thoughts. Were my claims to your heart just, I am not worthy of you. It is not a feeble, timid girl, like me, that could make you happy. No, Peyton, you are formed for great and glorious actions, deeds of daring and renown, and should be united to a soul like your own ; one that can rise above the weakness of her sex. I should be a weight to drag you to the dust ; but with a different spirit in your companion, you might soar to the very pinnacle of earthly glory. To such a one, therefore, I resign you freely, if not cheerfully ; and pray, oh, how fervently do I pray ! that with such a one you may be happy."

"Lovely enthusiast !" cried Dunwoodie, "you know not yourself, nor me. It is a woman mild, gentle, and dependent as yourself that my very nature loves ; deceive not yourself with visionary ideas of generosity, which will only make me miserable."

"Farewell, Major Dunwoodie," said the agitated girl ; "forget that you ever knew me, remember the claims of your bleeding country, and be happy."

"Happy !" repeated the youthful soldier, bitterly, as he saw her light form gliding through the gate of the lawn, and disappearing behind its shrubbery ; "yes, I am now happy, indeed !"

Throwing himself into the saddle, he plunged his spurs into his horse, and soon overtook his squadron, which was marching slowly over the hilly roads of the country to gain the banks of the Hudson.

CHAPTER XX

IN MAKING the arrangements by which Captain Lawton had been left, with Sergeant Hollister and twelve men, as a guard over the wounded, and heavy baggage of the corps, Dunwoodie had consulted not only the information which had been conveyed in the letter of Colonel Singleton, but the bruises of his comrade's body. In vain Lawton declared himself fit for any duty that man could perform, or plainly intimated that his men would never follow Tom Mason to a charge with the alacrity and confidence with which they followed himself ; his commander was firm, and the reluctant captain was compelled to comply with as good a grace as he could assume. Before parting, Dunwoodie repeated his caution to keep a watchful eye on the inmates of the cottage ; and especially enjoined him, if any movements of a particularly suspicious nature were seen in the neighborhood, to break up from his present quarters, and to move down with his party, and take possession of the domains of Mr. Wharton. A vague suspicion of danger to the family had been awakened in the breast of the major by the language of the peddler, although he was unable to refer it to any particular source, or to understand why it was to be apprehended.

For some time after the departure of the troops, the captain was walking before the door of the " Hotel," inwardly cursing his fate, that condemned him to an inglorious idleness at a moment when a meeting with the enemy might be expected, and replying to the occasional queries of Betty, who, from the interior of the building, ever and anon demanded, in a high tone of voice, an explanation of various

passages in the peddler's escape, which as yet she could not comprehend. At this instant he was joined by the surgeon, who had hitherto been engaged among his patients in a distant building, and was profoundly ignorant of everything that had occurred, even to the departure of the troops.

"Where are all the sentinels, John?" he inquired, as he gazed around with a look of curiosity, "and why are you here, alone?"

"Off—all off, with Dunwoodie, to the river. You and I are left here to take care of a few sick men and some women."

"I am glad," said the surgeon, "that Major Dunwoodie had consideration enough not to move the wounded. Here, you Mrs. Elizabeth Flanagan, hasten with some food, that I may appease my appetite."

"And I tell ye," said Betty, "that it's fasting ye must be, for the boys have ate me out entirely."

Disappointed in his meal, Sitgreaves suddenly declared his intention of visiting The Locusts, and inquiring into the state of Captain Singleton. Lawton was ready for the excursion; and mounting, they were soon on the road. For some time the two rode in silence.

"Listen!" said Lawton, stopping his horse. He had not done speaking, when a stone fell at his feet, and rolled harmlessly across the path.

"A friendly shot, that," cried the trooper; "neither the weapon, nor its force, implies much ill will."

"Blows from stones seldom produce more than contusions; it must be meteoric; there is no living being in sight, except ourselves."

"It would be easy to hide a regiment behind those rocks," returned the trooper, dismounting, and taking the stone in his hand. "Oh! here is the explanation along with the mystery." So saying, he tore a piece of paper that had been ingeniously fastened to the small fragment of rock

which had thus singularly fallen before him; and opening it, the captain read the following words, written in no very legible hand—

"A musket bullet will go farther than a stone, and things more dangerous than yarbs for wounded men lie hid in the rocks of Westchester. The horse may be good, but can he mount a precipice?"

"Thou sayest the truth, strange man," said Lawton; "courage and activity would avail but little against assassination and these rugged passes." Remounting his horse, he cried aloud, "Thanks, unknown friend; your caution will be remembered."

A meager hand was extended for an instant over a rock, in the air, and afterwards nothing further was seen, or heard, in that quarter, by the soldiers.

"Quite an extraordinary interruption," said the astonished Sitgreaves, "and a letter of very mysterious meaning."

"Oh! 'tis nothing but the wit of some bumpkin, who thinks to frighten two of the Virginians by an artifice of this kind," said the trooper, placing the billet in his pocket. His penetrating looks had already discovered another pile of rocks, which, jutting forward, nearly obstructed the highway that wound directly around its base.

"What the steed cannot mount, the foot of man can overcome," exclaimed the wary partisan. Throwing himself again from his saddle, and leaping a wall of stone, he began to ascend the hill at a pace which would soon have given him a bird's-eye view of the rocks in question, together with all their crevices. This movement was no sooner made than Lawton caught a glimpse of the figure of a man stealing rapidly from his approach, and disappearing on the opposite side of the precipice.

"Spur, Sitgreaves—spur!" shouted the trooper, dashing over every impediment in pursuit, "and murder the villain as he flies."

The former part of the request was promptly complied with, and a few moments brought the surgeon in full view of a man armed with a musket, who was crossing the road and evidently seeking the protection of the thick wood on its opposite side.

"Stop, my friend — stop until Captain Lawton comes up, if you please," cried the surgeon, observing him to flee with a rapidity that baffled his horsemanship. But as if the invitation contained new terrors, the footman redoubled his efforts, nor paused even to breathe, until he had reached his goal, when, turning on his heel, he discharged his musket towards the surgeon, and was out of sight in an instant. To gain the highway, and throw himself into his saddle, detained Lawton but a moment, and he rode to the side of his comrade just as the figure disappeared.

"Which way has he fled?" cried the trooper.

"John," said the surgeon, "am I not a noncombatant?"

"Whither has the rascal fled?" cried Lawton, impatiently.

"Where you cannot follow — into that wood. But I repeat, John, am I not a noncombatant?"

The disappointed trooper, perceiving that his enemy had escaped him, now turned his eyes, which were flashing with anger, upon his comrade, and gradually his muscles lost their rigid compression, his brow relaxed, and his look changed from its fierce expression to the covert laughter which so often distinguished his countenance. The surgeon sat in dignified composure on his horse, his thin body erect and his head elevated with the indignation of one conscious of having been unjustly treated.

"Why did you suffer the villain to escape?" demanded the captain. "Once within reach of my saber, and I would have given you a subject for the dissecting table."

"'T was impossible to prevent it," said the surgeon, pointing to the bars, before which he had stopped his horse. "The rogue threw himself on the other side of this fence,

and left me where you see ; nor would the man in the least attend to my remonstrances, or to an intimation that you wished to hold discourse with him."

"He was truly a discourteous rascal ; but why did you not leap the fence and compel him to a halt? You see but three of the bars are up, and Betty Flanagan could clear them on her cow."

The surgeon, for the first time, withdrew his eyes from the place where the fugitive had disappeared, and turned his look on his comrade. His head, however, was not permitted to lower itself in the least, as he replied —

"I humbly conceive, Captain Lawton, that neither Mrs. Elizabeth Flanagan, nor her cow, is an example to be emulated by Dr. Archibald Sitgreaves ; it would be but a sorry compliment to science to say that a Doctor of Medicine had fractured both his legs by injudiciously striking them against a pair of bar posts." While speaking, the surgeon raised the limbs in question to a nearly horizontal position, an attitude which really appeared to bid defiance to anything like a passage for himself through the defile ; but the trooper, disregarding this ocular proof of the impossibility of the movement, cried hastily —

"Here was nothing to stop you, man ; I could leap a platoon through, boot and thigh, without pricking with a single spur. Pshaw! I have often charged upon the bayonets of infantry over greater difficulties than this."

"You will please to remember, Captain John Lawton, that I am not the riding master of the regiment — nor a drill sergeant — nor a crazy cornet ; no, sir — and I speak it with a due respect for the commission of the Continental Congress — nor an inconsiderate captain, who regards his own life as little as that of his enemies. I am only, sir, a poor humble man of letters, a mere Doctor of Medicine, an unworthy graduate of Edinburgh, and a surgeon of dragoons ; nothing more, I do assure you, Captain John

Lawton." So saying, he turned his horse's head towards the cottage, and recommenced his ride.

On their arrival at the cottage of Mr. Wharton, no one appearing to usher them into an apartment, the captain proceeded to the door of the parlor, where he knew visitors were commonly received. On opening it, he paused for a moment, in admiration at the scene within. The person of Colonel Wellmere first met his eye, bending towards the figure of the blushing Sarah, with an earnestness of manner that prevented the noise of Lawton's entrance from being heard by either of the parties. Certain significant signs, which were embraced at a glance by the prying gaze of the trooper, at once made him a master of their secret; and he was about to retire as silently as he had advanced, when his companion, pushing himself through the passage, abruptly entered the room. Advancing instantly to the chair of Wellmere, the surgeon instinctively laid hold of his arm, and exclaimed —

"Bless me! — a quick and irregular pulse — flushed cheek and fiery eye — strong febrile symptoms, and such as must be attended to." While speaking, the doctor, who was much addicted to practicing in a summary way, — a weakness of most medical men in military practice, — had already produced his lancet, and was making certain other indications of his intentions to proceed at once to business. But Colonel Wellmere, recovering from the confusion of the surprise, arose from his seat haughtily, and said —

"Sir, it is the warmth of the room that lends me the color, and I am already too much indebted to your skill to give you any farther trouble; Miss Wharton knows that I am quite well, and I do assure you that I never felt better or happier in my life."

There was a peculiar emphasis on the latter part of this speech, that, however it might gratify the feelings of Sarah, brought the color to her cheeks again; and Sitgreaves, as

his eye followed the direction of those of his patient, did not fail to observe it.

"Your arm, if you please, madam," said the surgeon, advancing with a bow; "anxiety and watching have done their work on your delicate frame, and there are symptoms about you that must not be neglected."

"Excuse me, sir," said Sarah, recovering herself with womanly pride; "the heat is oppressive, and I will retire and acquaint Miss Peyton with your presence."

A little nettled at the contumacious deportment of the British colonel, Sitgreaves, after once more tendering services that were again rejected, withdrew to the chamber of young Singleton, whither Lawton had already preceded him.

CHAPTER XXI

THE graduate of Edinburgh found his patient rapidly improving in health, and entirely free from fever. His sister, with a cheek that was, if possible, paler than on her arrival, watched around his couch with tender care; and the ladies of the cottage had not, in the midst of their sorrows and varied emotions, forgotten to discharge the duties of hospitality. Frances felt herself impelled towards their disconsolate guest, with an interest for which she could not account, and with a force that she could not control.

Several days passed without any interruption of the usual avocations of the inhabitants of the cottage, or the party at the Four Corners. The former were supporting their fortitude with the certainty of Henry's innocence, and a strong reliance on Dunwoodie's exertions in his behalf, and the latter waiting with impatience the intelligence, that was hourly expected, of a conflict, and their orders to depart. Captain Lawton, however, waited for both these events in vain. Letters from the major announced that the enemy, finding that the party which was to coöperate with them had been defeated, and was withdrawn, had retired also behind the works of Fort Washington, where they continued inactive, threatening constantly to strike a blow in revenge for their disgrace. The letter concluded with a compliment to the trooper's honor, zeal, and undoubted bravery.

"Extremely flattering, Major Dunwoodie," muttered the dragoon, as he threw down this epistle and stalked across the floor to quiet his impatience. "A proper guard have you selected for this service; let me see — I have to watch

over the interests of a crazy, irresolute old man, who does not know whether he belongs to us or to the enemy; four women, three of whom are well enough in themselves, but who are not immensely flattered by my society; and the fourth, who, good as she is, is on the wrong side of forty; some two or three blacks; a talkative housekeeper, that does nothing but chatter about gold and despisables, and signs and omens; and poor George Singleton. Well, a comrade in suffering has a claim on a man — so I'll make the best of it."

As he concluded this soliloquy, the trooper took a seat and began to whistle, to convince himself how little he cared about the matter, when, by throwing his booted leg carelessly round, he upset the canteen that held his whole stock of brandy. The accident was soon repaired, but in replacing the wooden vessel, he observed a billet lying on the bench on which the liquor had been placed. It was soon opened, and he read, "The moon will not rise till after midnight — a fit time for deeds of darkness." There was no mistaking the hand; it was clearly the same that had given him the timely warning against assassination, and the trooper continued, for a long time, musing on the nature of these two notices, and the motives that could induce the peddler to favor an implacable enemy in the manner that he had latterly done. That he was a spy of the enemy, Lawton knew; for the fact of his conveying intelligence to the English commander in chief, of a party of Americans that were exposed to the enemy, was proved most clearly against him on the trial for his life. The consequences of his treason had been avoided, it is true, by a lucky order from Washington, which withdrew the regiment a short time before the British appeared to cut it off, but still the crime was the same. "Perhaps," thought the partisan, "he wishes to make a friend of me against the event of another capture; but, at all events, he spared my life on one occasion, and saved it

on another. I will endeavor to be as generous as himself, and pray that my duty may never interfere with my feelings."

Whether the danger, intimated in the present note, threatened the cottage or his own party, the captain was uncertain, but he inclined to the latter opinion, and determined to beware how he rode abroad in the dark. But the arrival of the surgeon, who had been to pay his daily visit to The Locusts, interrupted his meditations. Sitgreaves brought an invitation from the mistress of the mansion to Captain Lawton, desiring that the cottage might be honored with his presence at an early hour on that evening.

"Ha!" cried the trooper; "then they have received a letter, also."

"I think nothing more probable," said the surgeon; "there is a chaplain at the cottage from the royal army, who has come out to exchange the British wounded, and who has an order from Colonel Singleton for their delivery. But a more mad project than to remove them now was never adopted."

"A priest, say you!—is he a hard drinker—a real camp idler—a fellow to breed a famine in a regiment—or does he seem a man who is in earnest in his trade?"

"A very respectable and orderly gentleman, and not unreasonably given to intemperance, judging from the outward symptoms," returned the surgeon; "and a man who really says grace in a very regular and appropriate manner."

"And does he stay the night?"

"Certainly, he waits for his cartel; but hasten, John, we have but little time to waste. I will just step up and bleed two or three of the Englishmen who are to move in the morning, in order to anticipate inflammation, and be with you immediately."

The gala suit of Captain Lawton was easily adjusted to his huge frame, and his companion being ready, they once more took their route towards the cottage. Roanoke had been as much benefited by a few days' rest as his master;

and Lawton ardently wished, as he curbed his gallant steed, that his treacherous enemy stood before him, mounted and armed as himself. But no enemy, nor any disturbance whatever, interfered with their progress, and they reached The Locusts just as the sun was throwing his setting rays on the valley, and tingeing the tops of the leafless trees with gold. It never required more than a single look to acquaint the trooper with the particulars of every scene that was not uncommonly veiled, and the first survey that he took on entering the house told him more than the observations of a day had put into the possession of Dr. Sitgreaves. Miss Peyton accosted him with a smiling welcome that exceeded the bounds of ordinary courtesy, and which evidently flowed more from feelings that were connected with the heart than from manner. Frances glided about, tearful and agitated, while Mr. Wharton stood ready to receive them, decked in a suit of velvet that would have been conspicuous in the gayest drawing-room. Colonel Wellmere was in the uniform of an officer of the household troops of his prince, and Isabella Singleton sat in the parlor, clad in the habiliments of joy, but with a countenance that belied her appearance; while her brother by her side looked, with a cheek of flitting color, and an eye of intense interest, like anything but an invalid. As it was the third day that he had left his room, Dr. Sitgreaves, who began to stare about him in stupid wonder, forgot to reprove his patient for imprudence. Into this scene Captain Lawton moved with all the composure and gravity of a man whose nerves were not easily discomposed by novelties. His compliments were received as graciously as they were offered, and after exchanging a few words with the different individuals present, he approached the surgeon, who had withdrawn, in a kind of confused astonishment, to rally his senses.

"John," whispered the surgeon, with awakened curiosity, "what means this festival?"

"That your wig and my black head would look the better for a little of Betty Flanagan's flour; but it is too late now, and we must fight the battle armed as you see."

"Observe, here comes the army chaplain in his full robes as Doctor Divinitatis; what can it mean?"

"An exchange," said the trooper; "the wounded of Cupid are to meet and settle their accounts with the god, in the way of plighting faith to suffer from his archery no more."

"Oh!" said the surgeon, laying his finger on the side of his nose, and beginning to comprehend the case.

"Is it not a crying shame that a sunshine hero, and an enemy, should thus be suffered to steal away one of the fairest plants that grows in our soil," muttered Lawton; "a flower fit to be placed in the bosom of any man!"

"If he be not more accommodating as a husband than as a patient, John, I fear me that the lady will lead a troubled life."

"Let her," said the trooper, indignantly; "she has chosen from her country's enemies, and may she meet with a foreigner's virtues in her choice."

Further conversation was interrupted by Miss Peyton, who, advancing, acquainted them that they had been invited to grace the nuptials of her eldest niece and Colonel Wellmere. The gentlemen bowed; and the good aunt, with an inherent love of propriety, went on to add that the acquaintance was of an old date, and the attachment by no means a sudden thing. To this Lawton merely bowed still more ceremoniously.

Miss Peyton now retired with dignity to usher the intended bride into the presence of the company. The hour had arrived when American custom has decreed that the vows of wedlock must be exchanged; and Sarah, blushing with a variety of emotions, followed her aunt to the drawing-room. Wellmere sprang to receive the hand that, with an averted face, she extended towards him, and, for the first time, the English colonel appeared fully conscious of the

important part that he was to act in the approaching ceremony. Hitherto his air had been abstracted and his manner uneasy; but everything, excepting the certainty of his bliss, seemed to vanish at the blaze of loveliness that now burst on his sight. All arose from their seats, and the reverend gentleman had already opened the sacred volume, when the absence of Frances was noticed; Miss Peyton withdrew in search of her youngest niece, whom she found in her own apartment, and in tears.

"Come, my love, the ceremony waits but for us," said the aunt, affectionately entwining her arm in that of her niece; "endeavor to compose yourself, that proper honor may be done to the choice of your sister."

"Is he—can he be worthy of her?"

"Can he be otherwise?" returned Miss Peyton; "is he not a gentleman?—a gallant soldier, though an unfortunate one? and certainly, my love, one who appears every way qualified to make any woman happy."

Frances had given vent to her feelings, and, with an effort, she collected sufficient resolution to venture to join the party below. But to relieve the embarrassment of this delay, the clergyman had put sundry questions to the bridegroom; one of which was by no means answered to his satisfaction. Wellmere was compelled to acknowledge that he was unprovided with a ring; and to perform the marriage ceremony without one the divine pronounced to be canonically impossible. His appeal to Mr. Wharton, for the propriety of this decision, was answered affirmatively, as it would have been negatively, had the question been put in a manner to lead to such a result. In this stage of the dilemma Miss Peyton and Frances appeared. The surgeon of dragoons approached the former, and as he handed her to a chair, observed—

"It appears, madam, that untoward circumstances have prevented Colonel Wellmere from providing all of the

decorations that custom, antiquity, and the canons of the church have prescribed as indispensable to enter into the honorable state of wedlock."

Miss Peyton glanced her quiet eye at the uneasy bridegroom, and perceiving him to be adorned with what she thought sufficient splendor, allowing for the time and the suddenness of the occasion, she turned her look on the speaker, as if to demand an explanation.

The surgeon understood her wishes, and proceeded at once to gratify them.

"There is," he observed, "an opinion prevalent, that the heart lies on the left side of the body, and that the connection between the members of that side and what may be called the seat of life is more intimate than that which exists with their opposites. But this is an error that grows out of an ignorance of the organic arrangement of the human frame. In obedience to this opinion, the fourth finger of the left hand is thought to contain a virtue that belongs to no other branch of that digitated member; and it is ordinarily encircled, during the solemnization of wedlock, with a cincture, or ring, as if to chain that affection to the marriage state which is best secured by the graces of the female character." While speaking, the operator laid his hand expressively on his heart, and bowed nearly to the floor when he had concluded.

"I know not, sir, that I rightly understand your meaning," said Miss Peyton, whose want of comprehension was sufficiently excusable.

"A ring, madam, — a ring is wanting for the ceremony."

The instant that the surgeon spoke explicitly, the awkwardness of the situation was understood. She glanced her eyes at her nieces, and in the younger she read a secret exultation that somewhat displeased her; but the countenance of Sarah was suffused with a shame that the considerate aunt well understood. It suggested itself to all at the same moment, that the wedding ring of the late mother and sister

was reposing peacefully amid the rest of her jewelry in a secret receptacle, that had been provided at an early day to secure the valuables against the predatory inroads of the marauders who roamed through the county. Into this hidden vault the plate, and whatever was most prized, made a nightly retreat, and there the ring in question had long lain, forgotten until this moment. But it was the business of the bridegroom, from time immemorial, to furnish this indispensable to wedlock, and on no account would Miss Peyton do anything that transcended the usual reserve of the sex on this solemn occasion; certainly not until sufficient expiation for the offense had been made, by a due portion of trouble and disquiet. This material fact, therefore, was not disclosed by either, the aunt consulting female propriety, the bride yielding to shame, and Frances rejoicing that an embarrassment, proceeding from almost any cause, should delay her sister's vow. It was reserved for Dr. Sitgreaves to interrupt the awkward silence.

"If, madam, a plain ring, that once belonged to a sister of my own —" He paused, and hemmed — "If, madam, a ring of that description might be admitted to this honor, I have one that could be easily produced from my quarters at the Corners, and I doubt not it would fit the finger for which it is desired. There is a strong resemblance between — hem — between my late sister and Miss Wharton, in stature and anatomical figure; and, in all eligible subjects, the proportions are apt to be observed throughout the whole animal economy."

A glance of Miss Peyton's eye recalled Colonel Wellmere to a sense of his duty, and springing from his chair, he assured the surgeon that in no way could he confer a greater obligation on himself than by sending for that very ring. The operator bowed a little haughtily, and withdrew to fulfill his promise by dispatching a messenger on the errand. The aunt suffered him to retire; but unwillingness to admit a

stranger into the privacy of their domestic arrangements induced her to follow and tender the services of Cæsar instead of those of Sitgreaves's man, who had volunteered for this duty. Katy Haynes was accordingly directed to summon the black to the vacant parlor, and thither Miss Peyton and the surgeon repaired, to give their several instructions.

The consent to this sudden union of Sarah and Wellmere, and especially at a time when the life of a member of the family was in such imminent jeopardy, was given from a conviction that the unsettled state of the country would probably prevent another opportunity to the lovers of meeting, and a secret dread on the part of Mr. Wharton that the death of his son might, by hastening his own, leave his remaining children without a protector. But notwithstanding Miss Peyton had complied with her brother's wish to profit by the accidental visit of a divine, she had not thought it necessary to blazon the intended nuptials of her niece to the neighborhood, had even time been allowed; she thought, therefore, that she was now communicating a profound secret to the negro and her housekeeper.

"Cæsar," she commenced, with a smile, "you are now to learn that your young mistress, Miss Sarah, is to be united to Colonel Wellmere this evening."

"I t'ink I see him afore," said Cæsar, chuckling; "old black man can tell when a young lady make up he mind."

"Really, Cæsar, I find I have never given you credit for half the observation that you deserve; but as you already know on what emergency your services are required, listen to the directions of this gentleman, and take care to observe them strictly."

The black turned in quiet submission to the surgeon, who commenced as follows:

"Cæsar, your mistress has already acquainted you with the important event about to be solemnized within this habitation; but a cincture, or ring, is wanting to encircle the finger

of the bride — a custom derived from the ancients, and which has been continued in the marriage forms of several branches of the Christian church, and which is even, by a species of typical wedlock, used in the installation of prelates, as you doubtless understand."

"P'r'aps massa doctor will say him over ag'in," interrupted the old negro, whose memory began to fail him, just as the other made so confident an allusion to his powers of comprehension; "I t'ink I get him by heart dis time."

"It is impossible to gather honey from a rock, Cæsar, and therefore I will abridge the little I have to say. Ride to the Four Corners, and present this note to Sergeant Hollister, or to Mrs. Elizabeth Flanagan, either of whom will furnish the necessary pledge of connubial affection; and return forthwith."

The letter which the surgeon put into the hands of his messenger, as he ceased, was conceived in the following terms:

If the fever has left Kinder, give him nourishment. Take three ounces more of blood from Watson. Have a search made that the woman Flanagan has left none of her jugs of alcohol in the hospital. Renew the dressings of Johnson, and dismiss Smith to duty. Send the ring, which is pendent from the chain of the watch that I left with you to time the doses, by the bearer.

Archibald Sitgreaves, M.D.

Surgeon of Dragoons

"Cæsar," said Katy, when she was alone with the black, "put the ring, when you get it, in your left pocket, for that is nearest your heart; and by no means endeavor to try it on your finger, for it is unlucky."

"Try um on he finger?" interrupted the negro, stretching forth his bony knuckles; "t'ink a Miss Sally's ring go on old Cæsar finger?"

"'Tis not consequential whether it goes on or not," said the housekeeper; "but it is an evil omen to place

a marriage ring on the finger of another after wedlock, and of course it may be dangerous before."

"I tell you, Katy, I neber t'ink to put um on a finger."

"Go then, Cæsar, and do not forget the left pocket; be careful to take off your hat as you pass the graveyard, and be expeditious; for nothing, I am certain, can be more trying to the patience than thus to be waiting for the ceremony when a body has fully made up her mind to marry."

With this injunction Cæsar quitted the house, and he was soon firmly fixed in the saddle. From his youth, the black, like all of his race, had been a hard rider; but, bending under the weight of sixty winters, his African blood had lost some of its native heat. The night was dark, and the wind whistled through the vale with the dreariness of November. When Cæsar reached the graveyard, he uncovered his grizzled head with superstitious awe, and he threw around him many a fearful glance, in momentary expectation of seeing something superhuman. There was sufficient light to discern a being of earthly mold stealing from among the graves, apparently with a design to enter the highway. It is in vain that philosophy and reason contend with early impressions, and poor Cæsar was even without the support of either of these frail allies. He was, however, well mounted on a coach horse of Mr. Wharton's, and, clinging to the back of the animal with instinctive skill, he abandoned the rein to the beast. Hillocks, woods, rocks, fences, and houses flew by him with the rapidity of lightning, and the black had just begun to think whither and on what business he was riding in this headlong manner, when he reached the place where the roads met, and the Hotel Flanagan stood before him in its dilapidated simplicity. The sight of a cheerful fire first told the negro that he had reached the habitation of man, and with it came all his dread of the bloody Virginians; his duty must, however, be done, and, dismounting, he fastened the

foaming animal to a fence, and approached the window with cautious steps, to reconnoiter.

Before a blazing fire sat Sergeant Hollister and Betty Flanagan, enjoying themselves over a liberal potation.

"I tell ye, sargeant dear," said Betty, removing the mug from her mouth, "'t'is no r'asonable to think it was more than the peddler himself; sure now, where was the smell of sulphur, and the wings, and the tail, and the cloven foot? — besides, sargeant, it's no dacent to tell a lone female that she had Beelzeboob for a bedfellow."

"It matters but little, Mrs. Flanagan, provided you escape his talons and fangs hereafter," returned the veteran, following the remark by a heavy draft.

Cæsar heard enough to convince him that little danger from this pair was to be apprehended. His teeth already began to chatter, and the cold without and the comfort within stimulated him greatly to enter. He made his approaches with proper caution, and knocked with extreme humility. The appearance of Hollister with a drawn sword, roughly demanding who was without, contributed in no degree to the restoration of his faculties; but fear itself lent him power to explain his errand.

"Advance," said the sergeant, throwing a look of close scrutiny on the black, as he brought him to the light, — "advance, and deliver your dispatches; have you the countersign?"

"I don't t'ink he know what dat be," said the black, shaking in his shoes, "dough massa dat sent me gib me many t'ings to carry, dat he little understand."

"Who ordered you on this duty, did you say?"

"Well, it war he doctor, heself, so he come up on a gallop, as he alway do on a doctor's errand."

"'T was Dr. Sitgreaves; he never knows the countersign himself. Now, blackey, had it been Captain Lawton, he would not have sent you here, close to a sentinel, without the

countersign; for you might get a pistol bullet through your head, and that would be cruel to you; for although you be black, I am none of them who thinks niggers have no souls."

"Sure a nagur has as much sowl as a white," said Betty; "come hither, ould man, and warm that shivering carcase of yeers by the blaze of this fire. I'm sure a Guinea nagur loves hate as much as a souldier loves his drop."

Cæsar obeyed in silence, and a mulatto boy, who was sleeping on a bench in the room, was bidden to convey the note of the surgeon to the building where the wounded were quartered.

"Here," said the washerwoman, tendering to Cæsar a taste of the article that most delighted herself, "try a drop, smooty, 't will warm the black sowl within your crazy body, and be giving you spirits as you are going homeward."

"I tell you, Elizabeth," said the sergeant, "that the souls of niggers are the same as our own; how often have I heard the good Mr. Whitefield say that there was no distinction of color in heaven. Therefore it is reasonable to believe that the soul of this here black is as white as my own, or even Major Dunwoodie's."

"Be sure he be," cried Cæsar, a little tartly.

"It's a good sowl that the major is, anyway," returned the washerwoman; "and a kind sowl — ay, and a brave sowl too; and ye'll say all that yeerself, sargeant, I'm thinking."

"For the matter of that," returned the veteran, "there is one above even Washington to judge of souls; but this I will say, that Major Dunwoodie is a gentleman who never says, 'Go, boys' — but always says, 'Come, boys'; and if a poor fellow is in want of a spur or a martingale, and the leather whack is gone, there is never wanting the real silver to make up the loss, and that from his own pocket too."

"Why, then, are you here idle when all that he holds most dear are in danger?" cried a voice with startling abruptness; "mount, mount, and follow your captain; arm and mount, and that instantly, or you will be too late!"

This unexpected interruption produced an instantaneous confusion amongst the tipplers. Cæsar fled instinctively into the fireplace, where he maintained his position in defiance of a heat that would have roasted a white man. Sergeant Hollister turned promptly on his heel, and seizing his saber, the steel was glittering by the firelight in the twinkling of an eye; but perceiving the intruder to be the peddler, who stood near the open door that led to the lean-to in the rear, he began to fall back towards the position of the black, with a military intuition that taught him to concentrate his forces. Betty alone stood her ground, by the side of the temporary table.

"Faith," she cried, "but ye're wilcome, Mister Peddler, or Mister Birch, or Mister Beelzeboob, or what's yeer name. Ye're an honest divil anyway, and I'm hoping that you found the pitticoats convanient. Come forward, dear, and fale the fire; Sargeant Hollister won't be hurting you, for the fear of an ill turn you may be doing him hereafter — will ye, sargeant, dear?"

"Depart, ungodly man!" cried the veteran, edging still nearer to Cæsar, but lifting his legs alternately as they scorched with the heat, "depart in peace! There is none here for thy service, and you seek the woman in vain. There is a tender mercy that will save her from thy talons." The sergeant ceased to utter aloud, but the motion of his lips continued, and a few scattering words of prayer were alone audible.

The brain of the washerwoman was in such a state of confusion that she did not clearly comprehend the meaning of all this, but a new idea struck her imagination, and she broke forth —

"If it's me the man saaks, where's the matter, pray? Am I not a widowed body, and my own property? And you talk of tinderness, sargeant; but it's little I see of it anyway. Who knows but Mr. Beelzeboob here is free to spake his mind? I'm sure it is willing to hear I am."

"Woman," said the peddler, "be silent ; and you, foolish man, mount — arm and mount, and fly to the rescue of your officer, if you are worthy of the cause in which you serve, and would not disgrace the coat you wear." The peddler vanished from the sight of the bewildered trio, with a rapidity that left them uncertain whither he had fled.

On hearing the voice of an old friend, Cæsar emerged from his corner, and fearlessly advanced to the spot where Betty had resolutely maintained her ground, though in a state of utter mental confusion.

"I wish Harvey stop," said the black ; "if he ride down a road, I should like he company ; I don't t'ink Johnny Birch hurt he own son."

"Poor ignorant wretch !" exclaimed the veteran, recovering his voice with a long-drawn breath ; "think you that figure was made of flesh and blood ?"

"Harvey an't fleshy," replied the black, "but he berry clebber man."

"Pooh ! sargeant dear," exclaimed the washerwoman, "talk r'ason for once, and mind what the knowing one tells ye ; call out the boys, and ride a bit after Captain Jack ; rimimber, darling, that he told ye, the day, to be in readiness to mount at a moment's warning."

Another glass confirmed the veteran in a resolution that was only excited by a dread of his captain's displeasure, and he proceeded to summon the dozen men who had been left under his command. The boy arriving with the ring, Cæsar placed it carefully in the pocket of his waistcoat next his heart, and, mounting, shut his eyes, seized his charger by the mane, and continued in a state of comparative insensibility until the animal stopped at the door of the warm stable whence he had started.

CHAPTER XXII

THE situation of the party in Mr. Wharton's dwelling was sufficiently awkward during the hour of Caesar's absence; for such was the astonishing rapidity displayed by his courier that the four miles of road was gone over, and the events we have recorded had occurred, somewhat within that period of time. The English colonel exhibited a proper portion of uneasiness at this unexpected interruption of his felicity, and he sat with a varying countenance by the side of Sarah, who seemed to be profiting by the delay to gather fortitude for the solemn ceremony. In the midst of this embarrassing silence Dr. Singscraves addressed himself to Miss Peyton, by whose side he had contrived to procure a chair.

"Marriage, madam, is pronounced to be honorable in the sight of God and man; and it may be said to be reduced, in the present age, to the laws of nature and reason. The ancients, in sanctioning polygamy, lost sight of the provisions of nature, and condemned thousands to misery; but with the increase of science have grown the wise ordinances of society, which ordain that man should be the husband of but one woman."

Wellmore glanced a fierce expression of disgust at the surgeon, that indicated his sense of the tediousness of the other's remarks; while Miss Peyton, with a slight hesitation, as if fearful of touching on forbidden subjects, replied—

"I had thought, sir, that we were indebted to the Christian religion for our morals on this subject."

"True, madam, it is somewhere provided in the prescriptions of the apostles that the sexes should henceforth be on an equality in this particular. But in what degree could

polygamy affect holiness of life? It was probably a wise arrangement of Paul, who was much of a scholar, and probably had frequent conferences on this important subject with Luke, whom we all know to have been bred to the practice of medicine — ”

There is no telling how far the discursive fancy of Sitgreaves might have led him, on this subject, had he not been interrupted. But Lawton, who had been a close though silent observer of all that passed, profited by the hint to ask abruptly —

“ Pray, Colonel Wellmere, in what manner is bigamy punished in England ? ”

The bridegroom started, and his lip blanched. Recovering himself, however, on the instant, he answered with a suavity that became so happy a man —

“ Death ! — as such an offense merits,” he said.

“ Death and dissection,” continued the operator ; “ it is seldom that the law loses sight of eventual utility in a malefactor. Bigamy, in a man, is a heinous offense ! ”

“ More so than celibacy ? ” asked Lawton.

“ More so,” returned the surgeon, with undisturbed simplicity ; “ he who remains in a single state may devote his life to science and the extension of knowledge, if not of his species ; but the wretch who profits by the constitutional tendency of the female sex to credulity and tenderness incurs the wickedness of a positive sin, heightened by the baseness of deception.”

“ Really, sir, the ladies are infinitely obliged to you for attributing folly to them as part of their nature.”

“ Captain Lawton, in man the animal is more nobly formed than in woman. The nerves are endowed with less sensibility ; the whole frame is less pliable and yielding ; is it, therefore, surprising that a tendency to rely on the faith of her partner is more natural to woman than to the other sex ? ”

Wellmere, as if unable to listen with any degree of patience to so ill-timed a dialogue, sprang from his seat and paced the floor in disorder. Pitying his situation, the reverend gentleman, who was patiently awaiting the return of Cæsar, changed the discourse, and a few minutes brought the black himself. The billet was handed to Dr. Sitgreaves. The note contained a summary statement of the several subjects of the surgeon's directions, and referred him to the black for the ring. The latter was instantly demanded, and promptly delivered. A transient look of melancholy clouded the brow of the surgeon as he stood a moment and gazed silently on the bauble. He advanced to Sarah, and, unconscious of observation, placing the ring on her finger, said, "She for whom it was intended has long been in her grave, and the youth who bestowed the gift soon followed her sainted spirit; take it, madam, and God grant that it may be an instrument in making you as happy as you deserve!"

Sarah felt a chill at her heart as this burst of feeling escaped the surgeon; but Wellmere offering his hand, she was led before the divine, and the ceremony began. The first words of this imposing office produced a dead stillness in the apartment; and the minister of God proceeded to the solemn exhortation, and witnessed the plighted troth of the parties, when the investiture was to follow. The ring had been left, from inadvertency, and the agitation of the moment, on the finger where Sitgreaves had placed it; the slight interruption occasioned by the circumstance was over, and the clergyman was about to proceed, when a figure, gliding into the midst of the party, at once put a stop to the ceremony. It was the peddler. His look was bitter and ironical, while a finger, raised towards the divine, seemed to forbid the ceremony to go any further.

"Can Colonel Wellmere waste the precious moments here, when his wife has crossed the ocean to meet him?"

The nights are long, and the moon bright; a few hours will take him to the city."

Aghast at the suddenness of this extraordinary address, Wellmere for a moment lost the command of his faculties. To Sarah, the countenance of Birch, expressive as it was, produced no terror; but the instant she recovered from the surprise of his interruption, she turned her anxious gaze on the features of the man to whom she had just pledged her troth. They afforded the most terrible confirmation of all that the peddler affirmed; the room whirled round, and she fell lifeless into the arms of her aunt. There is an instinctive delicacy in woman that seems to conquer all other emotions; and the insensible bride was immediately conveyed from sight, leaving the room to the sole possession of the other sex.

The confusion enabled the peddler to retreat with a rapidity that would have baffled pursuit, had any been attempted, and Wellmere stood with every eye fixed on him, in ominous silence.

"'T is false — 't is false!" he cried, striking his forehead. "I have ever denied her claim; nor will the laws of my country compel me to acknowledge it."

"But what will conscience and the laws of God do?" asked Lawton.

"'T is well, sir," said Wellmere, haughtily, and retreating towards the door, "my situation protects you now; but a time may come —"

He had reached the entry, when a slight tap on his shoulder caused him to turn his head; it was Captain Lawton, who, with a smile of peculiar meaning, beckoned him to follow. The state of Wellmere's mind was such that he would gladly have gone anywhere to avoid the gaze of horror and detestation that glared from every eye he met. They reached the stables before the trooper spoke, when he cried aloud —

"Bring out Roanoke!"

His man appeared with the steed caparisoned for its master. Lawton, coolly throwing the bridle on the neck of the animal, took his pistols from the holsters, and continued, "Here are weapons that have seen good service before to-day — ay, and in honorable hands, sir. These were the pistols of my father, Colonel Wellmere; he used them with credit in the wars with France, and gave them to me to fight the battles of my country with. In what better way can I serve her than in exterminating a wretch who would have blasted one of her fairest daughters?"

"This injurious treatment shall meet with its reward," cried the other, seizing the offered weapon; "the blood lie on the head of him who sought it!"

"Amen! but hold a moment, sir. You are now free, and the passports of Washington are in your pocket; I give you the fire; if I fall, there is a steed that will outstrip pursuit; and I would advise you to retreat without much delay, for even Archibald Sitgreaves would fight in such a cause — nor will the guard above be very apt to give quarter."

"Are you ready?" asked Wellmere, gnashing his teeth with rage.

"Stand forward, Tom, with the lights; — fire!"

Wellmere fired, and the bullion flew from the epaulet of the trooper.

"Now the turn is mine," said Lawton, deliberately leveling his pistol.

"And mine!" shouted a voice, as the weapon was struck from his hand. "By all the fiends, 't is the mad Virginian! — fall on, my boys, and take him; this is a prize not hoped for!"

Unarmed, and surprised as he was, Lawton's presence of mind did not desert him; he felt that he was in the hands of those from whom he was to expect no mercy; and as four of the Skinners fell upon him at once, he used his gigantic strength to the utmost. Three of the band grasped

him by the neck and arms, with an intent to clog his efforts and pinion him with ropes. The first of these he threw from him, with a violence that sent him against the building, where he lay stunned with the blow. But the fourth seized his legs; and, unable to contend with such odds, the trooper came to the earth, bringing with him all of his assailants. The struggle on the ground was short but terrific; curses and the most dreadful imprecations were uttered by the Skinners, who in vain called on more of their band, who were gazing on the combat in nerveless horror, to assist. A difficulty of breathing, from one of the combatants, was heard, accompanied by the stifled moanings of a strangled man; and directly one of the group arose on his feet, shaking himself free from the wild grasp of the others. Both Wellmere and the servant of Lawton had fled; the former to the stables, and the latter to give the alarm, leaving all in darkness. The figure that stood erect sprang into the saddle of the unheeded charger; sparks of fire, issuing from the armed feet of the horse, gave a momentary light by which the captain was seen dashing like the wind towards the highway.

"You fools, he's off!" cried the leader, hoarse with rage and exhaustion; "fire! — bring him down — fire, or you'll be too late!"

The order was obeyed, and one moment of suspense followed, in the vain hope of hearing the huge frame of Lawton tumbling from his steed.

"He would not fall if you had killed him," muttered one; "I've known these Virginians sit their horses with two or three balls through them; ay, even after they were dead."

A freshening of the wind wafted the tread of a horse down the valley, which, by its speed, gave assurance of a rider governing its motion.

"These trained horses always stop when the rider falls," observed one of the gang.

"Then," cried the leader, striking his musket on the ground in a rage, "the fellow is safe! — to your business at once. A short half hour will bring down that canting sergeant and the guard upon us. 'Twill be lucky if the guns don't turn them out. Quick, to your posts, and fire the house in the chambers! Smoking ruins are good to cover evil deeds."

"What is to be done with this lump of earth?" cried another, pushing the body that yet lay insensible, where it had been hurled by the arm of Lawton; "a little rubbing would bring him to."

"Let him lie," said the leader, fiercely; "had he been half a man, that dragooning rascal would have been in my power; — enter the house, I say, and fire the chambers. We can't go amiss here; there is plate and money enough to make you all gentlemen — and revenge too."

The idea of silver was not to be resisted; and, leaving their companion, who began to show faint signs of life, they rushed tumultuously towards the dwelling. Wellmere availed himself of the opportunity, and, stealing from the stable with his own charger, he was able to gain the highway unnoticed. For an instant he hesitated, whether to ride towards the point where he knew the guard was stationed, and endeavor to rescue the family, or, profiting by his liberty, and the exchange that had been effected by the divine, to seek the royal army. Shame, and a consciousness of guilt, determined him to take the latter course, and he rode towards New York, stung with the reflection of his own baseness, and harassed with the apprehension of meeting with an enraged woman, whom he had married during his late visit to England, but whose claims, as soon as his first passion was over, he had resolved never to admit. In the tumult and agitation of the moment the retreat of Lawton and Wellmere was but little noticed, the condition of Mr. Wharton demanding the care and consolation of both the surgeon and the divine. The report of the

firearms first roused the family to the sense of a new danger, and but a moment elapsed before the leader, and one more of the gang, entered the room.

"Surrender! you servants of King George," shouted the leader, presenting his musket to the breast of Sitgreaves, "or I will let a little Tory blood from your veins."

"Gently — gently, my friend," said the surgeon; "you are doubtless more expert in inflicting wounds than in healing them; the weapon that you hold so indiscreetly is extremely dangerous to animal life."

"Yield, or take its contents."

"Why and wherefore should I yield? — I am a noncombatant. The articles of capitulation must be arranged with Captain John Lawton, though yielding, I believe, is not a subject on which you will find him particularly complying."

The fellow had by this time taken such a survey of the group as convinced him that little danger was to be apprehended from resistance, and, eager to seize his share of the plunder, he dropped his musket, and was soon busy, with the assistance of his men, in arranging divers articles of plate in bags. The cottage now presented a singular spectacle. The ladies were gathered around Sarah, who yet continued insensible, in one of the rooms that had escaped the notice of the marauders. Mr. Wharton sat in a state of imbecility, listening to, but not profiting by, the unmeaning words of comfort that fell from the lips of the clergyman. Singleton was lying on a sofa, while the surgeon was looking at the dressings with a coolness that mocked the tumult. Cæsar, and the attendant of Captain Singleton, had retreated to the wood in the rear of the cottage, and Katy Haynes was flying about the building, busily employed in forming a bundle of valuables, from which, with scrupulous honesty, she rejected every article that was not truly her own.

But to return to the party at the Four Corners. When the veteran had got his men mounted and under arms, a

restless desire to participate in the expedition came over the washerwoman. As Hollister was giving the orders to march, the voice of Betty was heard, exclaiming —

“Stop a bit, sargeant, dear, till two of the boys git out the cart, and I’ll jist ride wid ye; ’t is like there’ll be wounded, and it will be mighty convanient to bring them home in.”

The consent of the sergeant being obtained, the equipage of Mrs. Flanagan was soon in readiness to receive its burden.

“March!” cried the impatient washerwoman; “the black is there already, and it’s tardy the captain will think ye.”

“Hark! what is that?” said Hollister, pricking up his ears at the report of Wellmere’s pistol. “I’ll swear that was a pistol from our regiment. Mrs. Flanagan, I must leave you. March! — quick time!”

The next instant the trampling of a horse was heard coming up the road at a rapid rate.

“Stand! — who goes there?” shouted Hollister.

“Ha! Hollister, is it you?” cried Lawton, “ever ready and at your post; but where is the guard?”

“At hand, sir, and ready to follow you through thick and thin,” said the veteran, relieved at once from responsibility.

Led on by Lawton, the men followed, destitute alike of fear and reflection. Whether it was a party of the refugees, or a detachment from the royal army, that they were to assail, they were ignorant; but they knew that the officer in advance was distinguished for courage and personal prowess; and these are virtues that are sure to captivate the soldiery. On arriving near the gates of The Locusts, the trooper halted his party, and made his arrangements for the assault. Dismounting, he ordered eight of his men to follow his example, and turning to Hollister, said —

“Stand you here, and guard the horses; if anything attempt to pass, stop it, or cut it down, and —” The flames at this moment burst through the dormer windows and cedar roof of the cottage, and a bright light glared on the

darkness of the night. "On!" shouted the trooper, "on! —give quarter when you have done justice!"

There was a startling fierceness in the voice of the trooper that reached to the heart, even amid the horrors of the cottage. The leader of the Skinners dropped his plunder, and, for a moment, he stood in nerveless dread; then rushing to a window, he threw up the sash; at this instant Lawton entered, saber in hand.

"Die, miscreant!" cried the trooper, cleaving a marauder to the jaw; but the leader sprang into the lawn and escaped his vengeance. One more of the gang fell in with the dragoons and met his death; but the remainder had taken the alarm in season. Occupied with Sarah, neither Miss Singleton nor the ladies of the house had discovered the entrance of the Skinners, though the flames were raging around them with a fury that threatened the building with rapid destruction. The shrieks of Katy and the terrified consort of Cæsar, together with the uproar in the adjacent apartment, first roused Miss Peyton and Isabella to a sense of their danger.

"Merciful Providence!" exclaimed the alarmed aunt; "there is a dreadful confusion in the house, and there will be bloodshed in consequence of this affair."

"There are none to fight," returned Isabella; "Dr. Sitgreaves is very peaceable in his disposition, and surely Captain Lawton would not forget himself so far."

"The Southern temper is quick and fiery," continued Miss Peyton; "and your brother, feeble and weak as he is, has looked the whole afternoon flushed and angry."

"Good Heaven!" cried Isabella; "he is gentle as the lamb by nature, though the lion is not his equal when roused."

"We must interfere; our presence will quell the tumult, and possibly save the life of a fellow creature."

Miss Peyton, excited to attempt what she conceived a duty worthy of her sex and nature, advanced to the door, followed by Isabella. The apartment to which Sarah had been conveyed

was in one of the wings of the building, and it communicated with the principal hall of the cottage by a long and dark passage. This was now light, and across its termination several figures were seen rushing with an impetuosity that prevented an examination of their employment.

"Let us advance," said Miss Peyton, with a firmness her face belied; "they must respect our sex."

"They shall," cried Isabella, taking the lead in the enterprise. Frances was left alone with her sister. A few minutes were passed in silence, when a loud crash, in the upper apartments, was succeeded by a bright light that glared through the open door and made objects as distinct to the eye as if they were placed under a noonday sun. Sarah raised herself on her bed, and, staring wildly around, pressed both her hands on her forehead, endeavoring to recollect herself.

"This, then, is heaven—and you are one of its bright spirits. Oh! how glorious is its radiance! I had thought the happiness I have lately experienced was too much for earth. But we shall meet again—yes—yes—we shall meet again."

"Sarah! Sarah!" cried Frances, in terror; "my sister—my only sister—Oh! do not smile so horribly; know me, or you will break my heart."

"Hush," said Sarah, raising her hand for silence; "you may disturb his rest—surely, he will follow me to the grave. Think you there can be two wives in the grave? No—no—no—one—one—one—only one."

Frances dropped her head into the lap of her sister and wept in agony.

"Do you shed tears, sweet angel?" continued Sarah, soothingly; "then heaven is not exempt from grief. But where is Henry? He was executed, and he must be here too; perhaps they will come together. Oh, how joyful will be the meeting!"

Frances sprang to her feet and paced the apartment. The eye of Sarah followed her in childish admiration of her beauty.

"You look like my sister; but all good and lovely spirits are alike. Tell me, were you ever married? Did you ever let a stranger steal your affections from father, and brother, and sister? If not, poor wretch, I pity you, although you may be in heaven."

"Sarah — peace, peace — I implore you to be silent," shrieked Frances, rushing to her bed, "or you will kill me at your feet."

Another dreadful crash shook the building to its center. It was the falling of the roof, and the flames threw their light abroad, so as to make objects visible around the cottage, through the windows of the room. Frances flew to one of them, and saw the confused group that was collected on the lawn. Among them were her aunt and Isabella, pointing with distraction to the fiery edifice, and apparently urging the dragoons to enter it. For the first time she comprehended their danger; and uttering a wild shriek, she flew through the passage without consideration or object.

A dense and suffocating column of smoke opposed her progress. She paused to breathe, when a man caught her in his arms, and bore her, in a state of insensibility, through the falling embers and darkness, to the open air. The instant that Frances recovered her recollection, she perceived that she owed her life to Lawton, and throwing herself on her knees, she cried —

"Sarah! Sarah! Sarah! save my sister, and may the blessing of God await you!"

Her strength failed, and she sank on the grass, in insensibility. The trooper pointed to her figure, motioned to Katy for assistance, and advanced once more to the building. The fire had already communicated to the woodwork of the piazzas and windows, and the whole exterior of the cottage

was covered with smoke. The only entrance was through these dangers, and even the hardy and impetuous Lawton paused to consider. It was for a moment only, when he dashed into the heat and darkness, where, missing the entrance, he wandered for a minute, and precipitated himself back again upon the lawn. Drawing a single breath of pure air, he renewed the effort, and was again unsuccessful. On a third trial, he met a man staggering under the load of a human body. It was neither the place, nor was there time, to question, or to make distinctions; seizing both in his arms, with gigantic strength, he bore them through the smoke. He soon perceived, to his astonishment, that it was the surgeon and the body of one of the Skinners that he had saved.

"Archibald!" he exclaimed, "why, in the name of justice, did you bring this miscreant to light again? His deeds are rank to Heaven!"

The surgeon, who had been in imminent peril, was too much bewildered to reply instantly, but wiping the moisture from his forehead, and clearing his lungs from the vapor he had inhaled, he said piteously —

"Ah! it is all over! Had I been in time to have stopped the effusion from the jugular, he might have been saved; but the heat was conducive to hemorrhage; life is extinct indeed. Well, are there any more wounded?"

His question was put to the air, for Frances had been removed to the opposite side of the building, where her friends were collected, and Lawton once more had disappeared in the smoke.

By this time the flames had dispersed much of the suffocating vapor, so that the trooper was able to find the door, and in its very entrance he was met by a man supporting the insensible Sarah. There was but barely time to reach the lawn again before the fire broke through the windows and wrapped the whole building in a sheet of flame.

"God be praised!" ejaculated the preserver of Sarah; "it would have been a dreadful death to die."

The trooper turned from gazing at the edifice, to the speaker, and to his astonishment, instead of one of his own men, he beheld the peddler.

"Ha! the spy," he exclaimed; "by heavens, you cross me like a specter."

"Captain Lawton," said Birch, leaning in momentary exhaustion against the fence, to which they had retired from the heat, "I am again in your power, for I can neither flee nor resist."

"The cause of America is dear to me as life," said the trooper; "but she cannot require her children to forget gratitude and honor. Fly, unhappy man, while yet you are unseen, or it will exceed my power to save you."

"May God prosper you, and make you victorious over your enemies," said Birch, grasping the hand of the dragoon with an iron strength that his meager figure did not indicate.

"Hold!" said Lawton; "but a word — are you what you seem? — can you — are you —"

"A royal spy," interrupted Birch, averting his face, and endeavoring to release his hand.

"Then go, miserable wretch," said the trooper, relinquishing his grasp; "either avarice or delusion has led a noble heart astray!"

The bright light from the flames reached a great distance around the ruins, but the words were hardly past the lips of Lawton before the gaunt form of the peddler had glided over the visible space and plunged into the darkness beyond.

The eye of Lawton rested for a moment on the spot where he had last seen this inexplicable man, and then turning to the yet insensible Sarah, he lifted her in his arms and bore her, like a sleeping infant, to the care of her friends.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE captain, after placing Sarah on a sofa that had been hurled from the building by two of his men, retired, that the ladies might succeed him in his care. Miss Peyton and her niece flew, with a rapture that was blessed with a momentary forgetfulness of all but her preservation, to receive Sarah from the trooper ; but the vacant eye and flushed cheek restored them instantly to their recollection.

"Sarah, my child, my beloved niece," said the former, folding the unconscious bride in her arms, "you are saved, and may the blessing of God await him who has been the instrument."

"See," said Sarah, gently pushing her aunt aside, and pointing to the glimmering ruins, "the windows are illuminated in honor of my arrival. They always receive a bride thus—he told me they would do no less ; listen, and you will hear the bells."

"Here is no bride, no rejoicing, nothing but woe !" cried Frances, in a manner but little less frantic than that of her sister. "Oh ! may Heaven restore you to us—to yourself !"

"Peace, foolish young woman," said Sarah, with a smile of affected pity ; "all cannot be happy at the same moment ; perhaps you have no brother, or husband, to console you ; you look beautiful, and you will yet find one ; but," she continued, dropping her voice to a whisper, "see that he has no other wife—'tis dreadful to think what might happen, should he be twice married."

"The shock has destroyed her mind," cried Miss Peyton ; "my child, my beautiful Sarah is a maniac !"

"No, no, no," cried Frances, "it is fever; she is light-headed — she must recover — she shall recover."

The aunt caught joyfully at the hope conveyed in this suggestion, and dispatched Katy to request the immediate aid and advice of Dr. Sitgreaves. The surgeon was found inquiring among the men for professional employment, and inquisitively examining every bruise and scratch that he could induce the sturdy warriors to acknowledge they had received. A summons, of the sort conveyed by Katy, was instantly obeyed, and not a minute elapsed before he was by the side of Miss Peyton.

"This is a melancholy termination to so joyful a commencement of the night, madam," he observed, in a soothing manner; "but war must bring its attendant miseries, though doubtless it often supports the cause of liberty and improves the knowledge of surgical science."

Miss Peyton could make no reply, but pointed to her niece in agony.

"'T is fever," answered Frances; "see how glassy is her eye, and look at her cheek, how flushed."

The surgeon stood for a moment, deeply studying the outward symptoms of his patient, and then he silently took her hand in his own. It was seldom that the hard and abstracted features of Sitgreaves discovered any violent emotion; all his passions seemed schooled, and his countenance did not often betray what, indeed, his heart frequently felt. In the present instance, however, the eager gaze of the aunt and sister quickly detected his emotions. After laying his fingers for a minute on the beautiful arm, which, bared to the elbow, and glittering with jewels, Sarah suffered him to retain, he dropped it, and dashing a hand over his eyes, turned sorrowfully away.

"Here is no fever to excite — 't is a case, my dear madam, for time and care only; these, with the blessing of God, may effect a cure." "Come," he continued, "the night air can

do no service to George, or these ladies, and it is incumbent on us to remove them where they can find surgical attendance and refreshment. Here is nothing but smoking ruins and the miasma of the swamps."

To this rational proposition no objection could be raised, and the necessary orders were issued by Lawton to remove the whole party to the Four Corners.

America furnished but few and very indifferent carriage-makers at the period of which we write, and every vehicle that in the least aspired to that dignity was the manufacture of a London mechanic. When Mr. Wharton left the city, he was one of the very few who maintained the state of a carriage; and, at the time Miss Peyton and his daughters joined him in his retirement, they had been conveyed to the cottage in the heavy chariot that had once so imposingly rolled through the windings of Queen Street, or emerged, with somber dignity, into the more spacious drive of Broadway. This vehicle stood, undisturbed, where it had been placed on its arrival, and the age of the horses alone had protected the favorites of Cæsar from sequestration by the contending forces in their neighborhood. With a heavy heart the black, assisted by a few of the dragoons, proceeded to prepare it for the reception of the ladies. The chaise which conveyed Miss Singleton was also safe, for the stable and outbuildings had entirely escaped the flames; it certainly had been no part of the plan of the marauders to leave so well-appointed a stud behind them, but the suddenness of the attack by Lawton not only disconcerted their arrangements on this point, but on many others also. A guard was left on the ground, under the command of Hollister, who, having discovered that his enemy was of mortal mold, took his position with admirable coolness, and no little skill, to guard against surprise. He drew off his small party to such a distance from the ruins that it was effectually concealed in the darkness, while at the same time the light continued

sufficiently powerful to discover anyone who might approach the lawn with an intent to plunder.

Satisfied with this judicious arrangement, Captain Lawton made his dispositions for the march. Miss Peyton, her two nieces, and Isabella were placed in the chariot, while the cart of Mrs. Flanagan, amply supplied with blankets and a bed, was honored with the person of Captain Singleton. Dr. Sitgreaves took charge of the chaise and Mr. Wharton. What became of the rest of the family during that eventful night is unknown, for Cæsar alone, of the domestics, was to be found, if we except the housekeeper. Having disposed of the whole party in this manner, Lawton gave the word to march. He remained himself, for a few minutes, alone, on the lawn, secreting various pieces of plate and other valuables, that he was fearful might tempt the cupidity of his own men; when, perceiving nothing more that he conceived likely to overcome their honesty, he threw himself into the saddle with the soldierly intention of bringing up the rear.

"Stop, stop!" cried a female voice; "will you leave me alone to be murdered? The spoon is melted, I believe, and I'll have compensation if there's law or justice in this unhappy land."

Lawton turned an eye in the direction of the sound, and perceived a female emerging from the ruins, loaded with a bundle that vied in size with the renowned pack of the peddler.

"Whom have we here," said the trooper, "rising like a phoenix from the flames? Well, good woman, what means this outcry?"

"Outcry!" echoed Katy, panting for breath; "is it not disparagement enough to lose a silver spoon, but I must be left alone in this lonesome place, to be robbed, and perhaps murdered? Harvey would not serve me so; when I lived with Harvey, I was always treated with respect, at least,

if he was a little close with his secrets and wasteful of his money."

"Then, madam, you once formed part of the household of Mr. Harvey Birch?"

"You may say I was the whole of his household," returned the other; "there was nobody but I, and he, and the old gentleman; you didn't know the old gentleman, perhaps?"

"That happiness was denied me. How long did you live in the family of Mr. Birch?"

"I disremember the precise time, but it must have been hard on upon nine years; and what better am I for it all?"

"Sure enough; I can see but little benefit that you have derived from the association, truly. But is there not something unusual in the movements and character of this Mr. Birch?"

"Unusual is an easy word for such unaccountables!" replied Katy, lowering her voice, and looking around her; "he was a wonderful disregardful man, and minded a guinea no more than I do a kernel of corn. But help me to some way of joining Miss Jinit, and I will tell you prodigies of what Harvey has done, first and last."

"You will!" exclaimed the trooper, musing; "here, give me leave to feel your arm above the elbow. There—you are not deficient in bone, let the blood be as it may." So saying, he gave the spinster a sudden whirl, that effectually confused all her faculties, until she found herself safely, if not comfortably, seated on the crupper of Lawton's steed.

"Now, madam, you have the consolation of knowing that you are as well mounted as Washington. The nag is sure of foot and will leap like a panther."

"Let me get down," cried Katy, struggling to release herself from his iron grasp, and yet afraid of falling; "this is no way to put a woman on a horse; besides, I can't ride without a pillion."

"Softly, good madam," said Lawton, "for although Roanoke never falls before, he sometimes rises behind. He is far from being accustomed to a pair of heels beating upon his flanks like a drum major on a field day; a single touch of the spur will serve him for a fortnight, and it is by no means wise to be kicking in this manner, for he is a horse that but little likes to be outdone."

"Let me down, I say," screamed Katy; "I shall fall and be killed. Besides, I have nothing to hold on with; my arms are full of valuables."

"True," returned the trooper, observing that he had brought bundle and all from the ground; "I perceive that you belong to the baggage guard; but my sword belt will encircle your little waist as well as my own."

Katy was too much pleased with this compliment to make any resistance while he buckled her close to his own herculean frame, and driving a spur into his charger, they flew from the lawn with a rapidity that defied further denial. After proceeding for some time at a rate that a good deal discomposed the spinster, they overtook the cart of the washerwoman driving slowly over the stones, with a proper consideration for the wounds of Captain Singleton. The occurrences of that eventful night had produced an excitement in the young soldier that was followed by the ordinary lassitude of reaction, and he lay carefully enveloped in blankets, and supported by his man, but little able to converse, though deeply brooding over the past. The dialogue between Lawton and his companion ceased with the commencement of their motions, but a footpace being more favorable to speech, the trooper began anew—

"Then you have been an inmate in the same house with Harvey Birch?"

"For more than nine years," said Katy, drawing her breath, and rejoicing greatly that their speed was abated.

The deep tones of the trooper's voice were no sooner

conveyed to the ears of the washerwoman than, turning her head, where she sat directing the movements of the mare, she put into the discourse at the first pause.

"Belike, then, good woman, ye're knowing whether or no he's akin to Beelzeboob," said Betty; "it's Sargeant Hollister who's saying the same, and no fool is the sargeant, anyway."

"It's a scandalous disparagement," cried Katy, vehemently; "no kinder soul than Harvey carries a pack; and for a gown or a tidy apron he will never take a king's farthing from a friend. Beelzebub, indeed! For what would he read the Bible, if he had dealings with the evil spirit?"

"He's an honest divil, anyway; as I was saying before, the guinea was pure. But then the sargeant thinks him amiss, and it's no want of l'arning that Mister Hollister has."

"He's a fool!" said Katy, tartly; "Harvey might be a man of substance, were he not so disregardful. How often have I told him, that if he did nothing but peddle, and would put his gains to use, and get married, so that things at home could be kept within doors, and leave off his dealings with the rig'lars, and all incumberments, that he would soon become an excellent liver. Sergeant Hollister would be glad to hold a candle to him, indeed!"

"It wants but little to the rising moon," observed the trooper. He called a dragoon, who was riding in advance, issued a few orders and cautions relative to the comfort and safety of Singleton, and speaking a consoling word to his friend himself, gave Roanoke the spur and dashed by the cart at a rate that again put to flight all the philosophy of Katharine Haynes.

Notwithstanding the unusual burden that Roanoke sustained, he got over the ground with great rapidity, and the distance between the cart of Mrs. Flanagan and the chariot of Miss Peyton was passed in a manner that, however it

answered the intentions of the trooper, in no degree contributed to the comfort of his companion. The meeting occurred but a short distance from the quarters of Lawton, and at the same instant the moon broke from behind a mass of clouds and threw its light upon objects.

Compared with the simple elegance and substantial comfort of The Locusts, the Hotel Flanagan presented but a dreary spectacle. In the place of carpeted floors and curtained windows were the yawning cracks of a rudely constructed dwelling, and boards and paper were ingeniously applied to supply the place of the green glass in more than half the lights. The care of Lawton had anticipated every improvement that their situation would allow, and blazing fires were made before the party arrived. The dragoons who had been charged with this duty had conveyed a few necessary articles of furniture, and Miss Peyton and her companions, on alighting, found something like habitable apartments prepared for their reception. The mind of Sarah had continued to wander during the ride, and, with the ingenuity of the insane, she accommodated every circumstance to the feelings that were uppermost in her own bosom.

"It is impossible to minister to a mind that has sustained such a blow," said Lawton to Isabella Singleton; "time and God's mercy can alone cure it; but something more may be done towards the bodily comfort of all. You are a soldier's daughter, and used to scenes like this; help me to exclude some of the cold air from these windows."

Miss Singleton acceded to his request, and while Lawton was endeavoring, from without, to remedy the defect of broken panes, Isabella was arranging a substitute for a curtain within.

"I hear the cart," said the trooper, in reply to one of her interrogatories. "Betty is tender-hearted in the main; believe me, poor George will not only be safe but comfortable."

"God bless her for her care, and bless you all," said Isabella, fervently. "Dr. Sitgreaves has gone down the road to meet him, I know — what is that glittering in the moonlight?"

Directly opposite the window where they stood were the outbuildings of the farm, and the quick eye of Lawton caught at a glance the object to which she alluded.

"'T is the glare of firearms," said the trooper, springing from the window towards his charger, which yet remained caparisoned at the door. His movement was quick as thought, but a flash of fire was followed by the whistling of a bullet, before he had proceeded a step. A loud shriek burst from the dwelling, and the captain sprang into his saddle; the whole was the business of but a moment.

"Mount—mount, and follow!" shouted the trooper; and before his astonished men could understand the cause of alarm, Roanoke had carried him in safety over the fence which lay between him and his foe. The chase was for life or death, but the distance to the rocks was again too short, and the disappointed trooper saw his intended victim vanish in their clefts, where he could not follow.

"By the life of Washington," muttered Lawton, as he sheathed his saber, "I would have made two halves of him, had he not been so nimble on the foot—but a time will come!" So saying, he returned to his quarters, with the indifference of a man who knew his life was at any moment to be offered a sacrifice to his country. An extraordinary tumult in the house induced him to quicken his speed, and on arriving at the door, the panic-stricken Katy informed him that the bullet, aimed at his own life, had taken effect in the bosom of Miss Singleton.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE brief arrangements of the dragoons had prepared two apartments for the reception of the ladies, the one being intended as a sleeping room, and situated within the other. Into the latter Isabella was immediately conveyed, at her own request, and placed on a rude bed by the side of the unconscious Sarah. When Miss Peyton and Frances flew to her assistance, they found her with a smile on her pallid lip, and a composure in her countenance, that induced them to think her uninjured.

"God be praised!" exclaimed the trembling aunt; "the report of firearms, and your fall, had led me into an error. Surely, surely, there was enough of horror before; but this has been spared us."

Isabella pressed her hand upon her bosom, still smiling, but with a ghastliness that curdled the blood of Frances.

"Is George far distant?" she asked. "Let him know — hasten him, that I may see my brother once again."

"It is as I apprehended!" shrieked Miss Peyton; "but you smile — surely you are not hurt!"

"Quite well — quite happy," murmured Isabella; "here is a remedy for every pain."

Sarah arose from the reclining posture she had taken, and gazed wildly at her companion. She stretched forth her own hand and raised that of Isabella from her bosom. It was dyed in blood.

"See," said Sarah, "but will it not wash away love? Marry, young woman, and then no one can expel him from your heart, unless," — she added, whispering, and bending

over the other, — "you find another there before you; then die, and go to heaven — there are no wives in heaven."

The lovely maniac hid her face under the clothes and continued silent during the remainder of the night. At this moment Lawton entered. Inured as he was to danger in all its forms, and accustomed to the horrors of a partisan war, the trooper could not behold the ruin before him unmoved. He bent over the fragile form of Isabella, and his gloomy eye betrayed the workings of his soul.

"Isabella," he at length uttered, "I know you to possess a courage beyond the strength of women."

"Speak," she said earnestly; "if you have anything to say, speak fearlessly."

The trooper averted his face as he replied, "None ever receive a ball there, and survive."

"I have no dread of death, Lawton," returned Isabella; "I thank you for not doubting me; I felt it, from the first."

"These are not scenes for a form like yours," added the trooper; "'t is enough that Britain calls our youth to the field; but when such loveliness becomes the victim of war, I sicken of my trade."

"Hear me, Captain Lawton," said Isabella, raising herself with difficulty, but rejecting aid; "from early womanhood to the present hour have I been an inmate of camps and garrisons. I have lived to cheer the leisure of an aged father, and think you I would change those days of danger and privation for any ease? No! I have the consolation of knowing, in my dying moments, that what woman could do in such a cause, I have done."

"Who could prove a recreant, and witness such a spirit! Hundreds of warriors have I witnessed in their blood, but never a firmer soul among them all."

"'T is the soul only," said Isabella; "my sex and strength have denied me the dearest of privileges. But to you,

Captain Lawton, nature has been more bountiful ; you have an arm and a heart to devote to the cause, and I know they are an arm and a heart that will prove true to the last. And George — and — ” She paused, her lip quivered, and her eye sank to the floor.

“And Dunwoodie !” added the trooper ; “would you speak of Dunwoodie ?”

“Name him not,” said Isabella, sinking back, and concealing her face in her garments ; “leave me, Lawton — prepare poor George for this unexpected blow.”

The trooper continued for a little while gazing, in melancholy interest, at the convulsive shudderings of her frame, which the scanty covering could not conceal, and withdrew to meet his comrade. The interview between Singleton and his sister was painful, and, for a moment, Isabella yielded to a burst of tenderness ; but, as if aware that her hours were numbered, she was the first to rouse herself to exertion. At her earnest request the room was left to herself, the captain, and Frances. The repeated applications of the surgeon to be permitted to use professional aid were steadily rejected, and, at length, he was obliged unwillingly to retire.

“Raise me,” said the dying young woman, “and let me look on a face that I love, once more.” Frances silently complied, and Isabella turned her eyes in sisterly affection upon George. “It matters but little, my brother — a few hours must close the scene.”

“Live, Isabella, my sister, my only sister !” cried the youth, with a burst of sorrow that he could not control ; “my father ! my poor father — ”

“There is the sting of death ; but he is a soldier and a Christian. Miss Wharton, I would speak of what interests you, while yet I have strength for the task.”

“Nay,” said Frances, tenderly, “compose yourself ; let no desire to oblige me endanger a life that is precious

to — to — so many." The words were nearly stifled by her emotions, for the other had touched a chord that thrilled to her heart.

"Poor, sensitive girl!" said Isabella, regarding her with tender interest; "but the world is still before you, and why should I disturb the little happiness it may afford! Dream on, lovely innocent! and may God keep the evil day of knowledge far distant!"

"Oh, there is even now little left for me to enjoy," said Frances, burying her face in the clothes; "I am heart-stricken in all that I most loved."

"No!" interrupted Isabella; "you have one inducement to wish for life, that pleads strongly in a woman's breast. It is a delusion that nothing but death can destroy —" Exhaustion compelled her to pause, and her auditors continued in breathless suspense, until, recovering her strength, she laid her hand on that of Frances, and continued more mildly, "Miss Wharton, if there breathes a spirit congenial to Dunwoodie's, and worthy of his love, it is your own."

A flush of fire passed over the face of the listener, and she raised her eyes, flashing with an ungovernable look of delight, to the countenance of Isabella; but the ruin she beheld recalled better feelings, and again her head dropped upon the covering of the bed. Isabella watched her emotion with a look that partook both of pity and admiration.

"Such have been the feelings that I have escaped," she continued; "yes, Miss Wharton, Dunwoodie is wholly yours."

"Be just to yourself, my sister," exclaimed the youth; "let no romantic generosity cause you to forget your own character."

She heard him, and fixed a gaze of tender interest on his face, but slowly shook her head as she replied —

"It is not romance, but truth, that bids me speak. Oh! how much have I lived within an hour! Miss Wharton, I was born under a burning sun, and my feelings seem to have imbibed its warmth; I have existed for passion only."

"Say not so — say not so, I implore you," cried the agitated brother; "think how devoted has been your love to our aged father; how disinterested, how tender, your affection to me!"

"Yes," said Isabella, a smile of mild pleasure beaming on her countenance; "that, at least, is a reflection which may be taken to the grave."

Neither Frances nor her brother interrupted her meditations, which continued for several minutes; when, suddenly recollecting herself, she continued —

"I remain selfish even to the last; with me, Miss Wharton, America and her liberties was my earliest passion, and —" Again she paused, and Frances thought it was the struggle of death that followed; but reviving, she proceeded, "Why should I hesitate, on the brink of the grave! Dunwoodie was my next and my last. But," burying her face in her hands, "it was a love that was unsought."

"Isabella!" exclaimed her brother, springing from the bed, and pacing the floor in disorder.

"See how dependent we become under the dominion of worldly pride; it is painful to George to learn that one he loves had not feelings superior to her nature and education."

"Say no more," whispered Frances; "you distress us both — say no more, I entreat you."

"In justice to Dunwoodie I must speak; and for the same reason, my brother, you must listen. By no act or word has Dunwoodie ever induced me to believe he wished me more than a friend; nay, latterly, I have had the burning shame of thinking that he avoided my presence."

"Would he dare?" said Singleton, fiercely.

"Peace, my brother, and listen," continued Isabella, rousing herself with an effort that was final; "here is the innocent, the justifiable cause. We are both motherless; but that aunt — that mild, plain-hearted, observing aunt — has given you the victory. Oh! how much she loses who

loses a female guardian to her youth ! I have exhibited those feelings which you have been taught to repress. After this can I wish to live ? ”

“ Isabella ! my poor Isabella ! you wander in your mind. ”

“ But one word more — for I feel that blood, which ever flowed too swiftly, rushing where nature never intended it to go. Woman must be sought to be prized ; her life is one of concealed emotions ; blessed are they whose early impressions make the task free from hypocrisy, for such only can be happy with men like — like Dunwoodie. ” Her voice failed, and she sank back on her pillow in silence. The cry of Singleton brought the rest of the party to her bedside, but death was already upon her countenance ; her remaining strength just sufficed to reach the hand of George, and pressing it to her bosom for a moment, she relinquished her grasp, and, with a slight convulsion, expired.

Frances Wharton had thought that fate had done its worst in endangering the life of her brother and destroying the reason of her sister ; but the relief conveyed by the dying declaration of Isabella taught her that another sorrow had aided in loading her heart with grief. She saw the whole truth at a glance ; nor was the manly delicacy of Dunwoodie lost upon her — everything tended to raise him in her estimation ; and, for mourning that duty and pride had induced her to strive to think less of him, she was compelled to substitute regret that her own act had driven him from her in sorrow, if not in desperation. It is not in the nature of youth, however, to despair ; and Frances knew a secret joy in the midst of their distress, that gave a new spring to her existence.

The sun broke forth, on the morning that succeeded this night of desolation, in unclouded luster, and seemed to mock the petty sorrows of those who received his rays. Lawton had early ordered his steed, and was ready to mount as the first burst of light broke over the hills. His orders were already given, and, casting a glance of fierce chagrin at the narrow

space that had favored the flight of the Skinner, he gave Roanoke the rein and moved slowly towards the valley.

It was the wish of Singleton that the remains of his sister should be conveyed to the post commanded by his father, and preparations were early made to this effect. The wounded British were placed under the control of the chaplain; and towards the middle of the day Lawton saw all the arrangements so far completed as to render it probable that in a few hours he would be left, with his small party, in undisturbed possession of the Corners.

While leaning in the doorway, gazing in moody silence at the ground which had been the scene of the last night's chase, his ear caught the sound of a horse, and the next moment a dragoon of his own troop appeared dashing up the road, as if on business of the last importance. The steed was foaming, and the rider had the appearance of having done a day's service. Without speaking, he placed a letter in the hand of Lawton, and led his charger to the stable. The trooper knew the hand of the major, and ran his eye over the following :

I rejoice it is the order of Washington that the family of The Locusts are to be removed above the Highlands. They are to be admitted to the society of Captain Wharton, who waits only for their testimony to be tried. You will communicate this order, and with proper delicacy I do not doubt. The English are moving up the river; and the moment you see the Whartons in safety, break up and join your troop. There will be good service to be done when we meet, as Sir Henry is reported to have sent out a real soldier in command. Reports must be made to the commandant at Peekskill, for Colonel Singleton is withdrawn to headquarters, to preside over the inquiry upon poor Wharton. Fresh orders have been sent to hang the peddler if we can take him, but they are not from the commander in chief. Detail a small guard with the ladies, and get into the saddle as soon as possible.

Yours sincerely,

Peyton Dunwoodie

This communication entirely changed the whole arrangement. There was no longer any motive for removing the body of Isabella, since her father was no longer with his command, and Singleton reluctantly acquiesced in an immediate interment. A retired and lovely spot was selected near the foot of the adjacent rocks, and such rude preparations were made as the time and the situation of the country permitted. A few of the neighboring inhabitants collected from curiosity and interest, and Miss Peyton and Frances wept in sincerity over her grave. The solemn offices of the church were performed by the minister, who had so lately stood forth to officiate in another and very different duty; and Lawton bent his head, and passed his hand across his brow, while the words that accompanied the first clod were uttered.

A new stimulus was given to the Whartons by the intelligence conveyed in the letter of Dunwoodie; and Cæsar, with his horses, was once more put in requisition. The relics of the property were intrusted to a neighbor in whom they had confidence; and, accompanied by the unconscious Sarah, and attended by four dragoons and all of the American wounded, Mr. Wharton's party took their departure.

The word to march was given; and Lawton, throwing a look of melancholy regret towards the grave of Isabella, led the way, accompanied by the surgeon in a brown study; while Sergeant Hollister and Betty brought up the rear, leaving a fresh southerly wind to whistle through the open doors and broken windows of the Hotel Flanagan, where the laugh of hilarity, the joke of the hardy partisan, and the lamentations of the sorrowing had so lately echoed.

CHAPTER XXV

THE roads of Westchester are, at this hour, below the improvements of the country. Their condition at the time of the tale has already been alluded to in these pages ; and the reader will therefore easily imagine the task assumed by Cæsar, when he undertook to guide the translated chariot of the English prelate through their windings, into one of the less frequented passes of the Highlands of the Hudson.

While Cæsar and his steeds were contending with these difficulties, the inmates of the carriage were too much engrossed with their own cares to attend to those who served them. The mind of Sarah had ceased to wander so wildly as at first ; but at every advance that she made towards reason, she seemed to retire a step from animation ; from being excited and flighty, she was gradually becoming moody and melancholy. The day's march was performed chiefly in silence, and the party found shelter for the night in different farmhouses.

The following morning the cavalcade dispersed. The wounded diverged towards the river, with the intention of taking water at Peekskill, in order to be transported to the hospitals of the American army above. The litter of Singleton was conveyed to a part of the Highlands where his father held his quarters, and where it was intended that the youth should complete his cure ; the carriage of Mr. Wharton, accompanied by a wagon conveying the housekeeper and what baggage had been saved and could be transported, resumed its route towards the place where Henry Wharton was held in duress, and where he only waited their arrival to be put on trial for his life.

The country which lies between the waters of the Hudson and Long Island Sound is, for the first forty miles from their junction, a succession of hills and dales. The land bordering on the latter then becomes less abrupt, and gradually assumes a milder appearance, until it finally melts into the lovely plains and meadows of the Connecticut. But as you approach the Hudson the rugged aspect increases, until you at length meet with the formidable barrier of the Highlands. Here the Neutral Ground ceased. The royal army held the two points of land that commanded the southern entrance of the river into the mountains; but all the remaining passes were guarded by the Americans.

We have already stated that the pickets of the continental army were sometimes pushed low into the country, and that the hamlet of the White Plains was occasionally maintained by parties of its troops. At other times the advanced guards were withdrawn to the northern extremity of the county, and, as has been shown, the intermediate country was abandoned to the ravages of the miscreants who plundered between both armies, serving neither.

The road taken by our party was not the one that communicates between the two principal cities of the state, but was a retired and unfrequented pass, that to this hour is but little known, and which, entering the hills near the eastern boundary, emerges into the plain above, many miles from the Hudson.

It would have been impossible for the tired steeds of Mr. Wharton to drag the heavy chariot up the lengthened and steep ascents which now lay before them; and a pair of country horses were procured, with but little regard to their owner's wishes, by the two dragoons who still continued to accompany the party. With their assistance Cæsar was enabled to advance, by slow and toilsome steps, into the bosom of the hills. Willing to relieve her own melancholy by breathing a fresher air, and also to lessen the

weight, Frances alighted as they reached the foot of the mountain. She found that Katy had made similar preparations, with the like intention of walking to the summit. It was near the setting of the sun, and from the top of the mountain their guard had declared that the end of their journey might be discerned. Frances moved forward with the elastic step of youth ; and, followed by the housekeeper at a little distance, she soon lost sight of the sluggish carriage, that was slowly toiling up the hill, occasionally halting to allow the horses to breathe.

When they had reached the highest point in their toilsome progress to the summit, Frances seated herself on a rock to rest and to admire. Immediately at her feet lay a deep dell, but little altered by cultivation, and dark with the gloom of a November sunset. Another hill rose opposite to the place where she sat, at no great distance, along whose rugged sides nothing was to be seen but shapeless rocks, and oaks whose stunted growth showed a meager soil.

The day had been cloudy and cool, and thin fleecy clouds hung around the horizon, often promising to disperse, but as frequently disappointing Frances in the hope of catching a parting beam from the setting sun. At length a solitary gleam struck on the base of the mountain on which she was gazing, and moved up its side, until, reaching the summit, it stood for a minute, forming a crown of glory to the somber pile. So strong were the rays that what was before indistinct now clearly opened to the view. With a feeling of awe at being thus unexpectedly admitted, as it were, into the secrets of that desert place, Frances gazed intently, until, among the scattered trees and fantastic rocks, something like a rude structure was seen. It was low, and so obscured by the color of its materials that but for its roof, and the glittering of a window, it must have escaped her notice. While yet lost in the astonishment created by discovering a habitation in such a spot, on moving her eyes she perceived

another object that increased her wonder. It apparently was a human figure, but of singular mold and unusual deformity. It stood on the edge of a rock, a little above the hut, and it was no difficult task for our heroine to fancy it was gazing at the vehicles that were ascending the side of the mountain beneath her. The distance, however, was too great to distinguish with precision. After looking at it a moment in breathless wonder, Frances had just come to the conclusion that it was ideal, and that what she saw was a part of the rock itself, when the object moved swiftly from its position, and glided into the hut, at once removing every doubt as to the nature of either, and she thought, as the figure vanished from her view, that it bore a marked likeness to Birch, moving under the weight of his pack. She continued to gaze towards the mysterious residence, when the gleam of light passed away, and at the same instant the tones of a bugle rang through the glens and hollows, and were reëchoed in every direction. Springing to her feet, the alarmed girl heard the trampling of horses, and directly a party in the well-known uniform of the Virginians came sweeping round the point of a rock near her, and drew up at a short distance. Again the bugle sounded a lively strain, and before the agitated Frances had time to rally her thoughts, Dunwoodie dashed by the party of dragoons, threw himself from his charger, and advanced to her side.

His manner was earnest and interested, but in a slight degree constrained. In a few words he explained that he had been ordered up, with a party of Lawton's men, in the absence of the captain himself, to attend the trial of Henry, which was fixed for the morrow; and that, anxious for their safety in the rude passes of the mountain, he had ridden a mile or two in quest of the travelers. Frances explained, with trembling voice, the reason of her being in advance, and taught him momentarily to expect the arrival of her

father. The constraint of his manner had, however, unwillingly on her part, communicated itself to her own deportment, and the approach of the chariot was a relief to both. The major handed her in, spoke a few words of encouragement to Mr. Wharton and Miss Peyton, and again mounting, led the way towards the plains of Fishkill, which broke on their sight, on turning the rock, with the effect of enchantment. A short half hour brought them to the door of the farmhouse, which the care of Dunwoodie had already prepared for their reception, and where Captain Wharton was anxiously expecting their arrival.

CHAPTER XXVI

THE friends of Henry Wharton had placed so much reliance on his innocence that they were unable to see the full danger of his situation. As the moment of trial, however, approached, the uneasiness of the youth himself increased; and after spending most of the night with his afflicted family, he awoke, on the following morning, from a short and disturbed slumber, to a clearer sense of his condition, and a survey of the means that were to extricate him from it with life. A strong guard was stationed in the outbuilding of the farmhouse where the prisoner was quartered, and several sentinels watched the avenues that approached the dwelling. Another was constantly near the room of the British officer. A court was already detailed to examine into the circumstances; and upon their decision the fate of Henry rested.

The moment at length arrived, and the different actors in the approaching investigation assembled. Frances experienced a feeling like suffocation as, after taking her seat in the midst of her family, her eyes wandered over the group who were thus collected. The judges, three in number, sat by themselves, clad in the vestments of their profession, and maintained a gravity worthy of the occasion, and becoming in their rank. In the center was a man of advanced years, whose whole exterior bore the stamp of early and long-tried military habits. This was the president of the court; and Frances, after taking a hasty and unsatisfactory view of his associates, turned to his benevolent countenance as to the harbinger of mercy to her brother. There was a melting and subdued expression in the features of the veteran that,

contrasted with the rigid decency and composure of the others, could not fail to attract her notice. His attire was strictly in conformity to the prescribed rules of the service to which he belonged; but while his hair was erect and military, his fingers trifled, with a kind of convulsive and unconscious motion, with a bit of crape that entwined the hilt of the sword on which his body partly reclined, and which, like himself, seemed a relic of older times. There were the workings of an unquiet soul within; but his military front blended awe with the pity that its exhibition excited. His associates were officers selected from the eastern troops, who held the fortresses of West Point and the adjacent passes; they were men who had attained the meridian of life, and the eye sought in vain the expression of any passion or emotion on which it might seize as an indication of human infirmity. In their demeanor there was a mild, but a grave, intellectual reserve. If there was no ferocity nor harshness to chill, neither was there compassion nor interest to attract. They were men who had long acted under the dominion of a prudent reason, and whose feelings seemed trained to a perfect submission to their judgments.

Before these arbiters of his fate Henry Wharton was ushered, under the custody of armed men. A profound and awful silence succeeded his entrance, and the blood of Frances chilled as she noted the grave character of the whole proceedings. There was but little of pomp in the preparations, to impress her imagination; but the reserved, businesslike air of the whole scene made it seem, indeed, as if the destinies of life awaited the result. Two of the judges sat in grave reserve, fixing their inquiring eyes on the object of their investigation; but the president continued gazing around with uneasy, convulsive motions of the muscles of the face, that indicated a restlessness foreign to his years and duty. It was Colonel Singleton,

who, but the day before, had learned the fate of Isabella, but who stood forth in the discharge of a duty that his country required at his hands. The silence, and the expectation in every eye, at length struck him, and making an effort to collect himself, he spoke, in the tones of one used to authority.

"Bring forth the prisoner," he said, with a wave of the hand.

The sentinels dropped the points of their bayonets towards the judges, and Henry Wharton advanced, with a firm step; into the center of the apartment. All was now anxiety and eager curiosity. Frances turned for a moment in grateful emotion, as the deep and perturbed breathing of Dunwoodie reached her ears; but her brother again concentrated all her interest in one feeling of intense care. In the background were arranged the inmates of the family who owned the dwelling, and behind them, again, was a row of shining faces of ebony, glistening with pleased wonder. Among these was the faded luster of Cæsar Thompson's countenance.

"You are said," continued the president, "to be Henry Wharton, a captain in his Britannic Majesty's 60th regiment of foot."

"I am."

"I like your candor, sir; it partakes of the honorable feelings of a soldier and cannot fail to impress your judges favorably. It is an accusation against you that, being an officer of the enemy, you passed the pickets of the American army at the White Plains, in disguise, on the 29th of October last, whereby you are suspected of views hostile to the interests of America, and have subjected yourself to the punishment of a spy."

The mild but steady tones of the speaker, as he slowly repeated the substance of this charge, were full of authority. The accusation was so plain, the facts so limited, the

proof so obvious, and the penalty so well established that escape seemed impossible; but Henry replied, with earnest grace —

"That I passed your pickets in disguise is true; but —"

"Peace!" interrupted the president; "the usages of war are stern enough in themselves; you need not aid them to your own condemnation."

"The prisoner can retract that declaration if he please," remarked another judge. "His confession, if taken, goes fully to prove the charge."

"I retract nothing that is true," said Henry, proudly.

The two nameless judges heard him in silent composure, yet there was no exultation mingled with their gravity. The president now appeared, however, to take new interest in the scene.

"Your sentiment is noble, sir," he said; "I only regret that a youthful soldier should so far be misled by loyalty as to lend himself to the purposes of deceit."

"Deceit!" echoed Wharton; "I thought it prudent to guard against capture from my enemies."

"A soldier, Captain Wharton, should never meet his enemy but openly, and with arms in his hands. I have served two kings of England, as I now serve my native land; but never did I approach a foe, unless under the light of the sun, and with honest notice that an enemy was nigh."

"You are at liberty to explain what your motives were in entering the ground held by our army in disguise," said the other judge, with a slight movement of the muscles of his mouth.

"I am the son of this aged man before you," continued Henry. "It was to visit him that I encountered the danger. Besides, the country below is seldom held by your troops, and its very name implies a right to either party to move at pleasure over its territory."

"Its name, as a neutral ground, is unauthorized by law; it is an appellation that originates with the condition of the country. But wherever an army goes, it carries its rights along, and the first is the ability to protect itself."

"I am no casuist, sir," returned the youth; "but I feel that my father is entitled to my affection, and I would encounter greater risks to prove it to him in his old age."

"A very commendable spirit," cried the veteran; "come, gentlemen, this business brightens. I confess, at first, it was very bad; but no man can censure him for desiring to see his parent."

"And have you proof that such only was your intention?"

"Yes — here," said Henry, admitting a ray of hope; "here is proof — my father, my sister, Major Dunwoodie, all know it."

"Then, indeed," returned his immovable judge, "we may be able to save you. It would be well, sir, to examine further into this business."

"Certainly," said the president, with alacrity; "let the elder Mr. Wharton approach and take the oath."

The father made an effort at composure, and advancing with a feeble step, he complied with the necessary forms of the court.

"You are the father of the prisoner?" said Colonel Singleton, in a subdued voice, after pausing a moment in respect for the agitation of the witness.

"He is my only son."

"And what do you know of his visit to your house, on the 29th day of October last?"

"He came, as he told you, to see me and his sisters."

"Was he in disguise?" asked the other judge.

"He did not wear the uniform of the 60th."

"To see his sisters too!" said the president with great emotion. "Have you daughters, sir?"

"I have two — both are in this house."

"Had he a wig?" interrupted the officer.

"There was some such thing, I do believe, upon his head."

"And how long had you been separated?" asked the president.

"One year and two months."

"Did he wear a loose greatcoat of coarse materials?" inquired the officer, referring to the paper that contained the charges.

"There was an overcoat."

"And you think that it was to see you only that he came out?"

"Me, and my daughters."

"A boy of spirit," whispered the president to his silent comrade. "I see but little harm in such a freak; 't was imprudent, but then it was kind."

"Do you know that your son was intrusted with no commission from Sir Henry Clinton, and that the visit to you was not merely a cloak to other designs?"

"How can I know it?" said Mr. Wharton, in alarm; "would Sir Henry intrust me with such a business?"

"Know you anything of this pass?" exhibiting the paper that Dunwoodie had retained when Wharton was taken.

"Nothing—upon my honor, nothing," cried the father, shrinking from the paper as from contagion.

"On your oath?"

"Nothing."

"Have you other testimony?—this does not avail you, Captain Wharton. You have been taken in a situation where your life is forfeited; the labor of proving your innocence rests with yourself. Take time to reflect, and be cool."

There was a frightful calmness in the manner of this judge that appalled the prisoner. In the sympathy of Colonel Singleton he could easily lose sight of his danger;

but the obdurate and collected air of the others was ominous of his fate. He continued silent, casting imploring glances towards his friend. Dunwoodie understood the appeal and offered himself as a witness. He was sworn, and desired to relate what he knew. His statement did not materially alter the case, and Dunwoodie felt that it could not. To him personally but little was known, and that little rather militated against the safety of Henry than otherwise. His account was listened to in silence, and the significant shake of the head that was made by the silent member spoke too plainly what effect it had produced.

"Still you think that the prisoner had no other object than what he has avowed?" said the president, when he had ended.

"None other, I will pledge my life," cried the major, with fervor.

"Will you swear it?" asked the immovable judge.

"How can I? God alone can tell the heart; but I have known this gentleman from a boy; deceit never formed part of his character. He is above it."

"You say that he escaped, and was retaken in open arms?" said the president.

"He was; nay, he received a wound in the combat. You see he yet moves his arm with difficulty. Would he, think you, sir, have trusted himself where he could fall again into our hands, unless conscious of innocence?"

"Would André have deserted a field of battle, Major Dunwoodie, had he encountered such an event near Tarrytown?" asked his deliberate examiner. "Is it not natural to youth to seek glory?"

"Do you call this glory?" exclaimed the major; "an ignominious death and a tarnished name?"

"Major Dunwoodie," returned the other, still with inveterate gravity, "you have acted nobly; your duty has been arduous and severe, but it has been faithfully and honorably discharged; ours must not be less so."

During the examination the most intense interest prevailed among the hearers. With that kind of feeling which could not separate the principle from the cause, most of the auditors thought that if Dunwoodie failed to move the hearts of Henry's judges, no other possessed the power. Cæsar thrust his misshapen form forward, and his features, so expressive of the concern he felt, and so different from the vacant curiosity pictured in the countenances of the other blacks, caught the attention of the silent judge. For the first time he spoke —

"Let that black be brought forward."

It was too late to retreat, and Cæsar found himself confronted with a row of rebel officers before he knew what was uppermost in his thoughts. The others yielded the examination to the one who suggested it, and using all due deliberation, he proceeded accordingly.

"You know the prisoner?"

"I t'ink he ought," returned the black, in a manner as sententious as that of his examiner.

"Did he give you the wig when he threw it aside?"

"I don't want 'em," grumbled Cæsar; "got a berry good hair heself."

"Were you employed in carrying any letters or messages while Captain Wharton was in your master's house?"

"I do what a tell me," returned the black.

"But what did they tell you to do?"

"Sometime a one t'ing — sometime anoder."

"Enough," said Colonel Singleton, with dignity; "you have the noble acknowledgment of a gentleman, what more can you obtain from this slave? Captain Wharton, you perceive the unfortunate impression against you. Have you other testimony to adduce?"

To Henry there now remained but little hope; his confidence in his security was fast ebbing, but with an indefinite expectation of assistance from the loveliness of his sister,

he fixed an earnest gaze on the pallid features of Frances. She arose, and with a tottering step moved towards the judges; the paleness of her cheek continued but for a moment, and gave place to a flush of fire, and with a light but firm tread she stood before them. Raising her hand to her polished forehead, Frances threw aside her exuberant locks and displayed a picture of beauty and innocence to their view that might have moved even sterner natures. The president shrouded his eyes for a moment, as if the wild eye and speaking countenance recalled the image of another. The movement was transient, and recovering himself, he said, with an earnestness that betrayed his secret wishes —

"To you, then, your brother previously communicated his intention of paying your family a secret visit?"

"No! — no!" said Frances, pressing her hand on her brain, as if to collect her thoughts; "he told me nothing — we knew not of the visit until he arrived; but can it be necessary to explain to gallant men that a child would incur hazard to meet his only parent, and that in times like these, and in a situation like ours?"

"But was this the first time? Did he never even talk of doing so before?" inquired the colonel, leaning towards her with paternal interest.

"Certainly — certainly," cried Frances, catching the expression of his own benevolent countenance. "This is but the fourth of his visits."

"I knew it!" exclaimed the veteran, rubbing his hands with delight; "an adventurous, warm-hearted son — I warrant me, gentlemen, a fiery soldier in the field! In what disguises did he come?"

"In none, for none were then necessary; the royal troops covered the country and gave him safe passage."

"And was this the first of his visits out of the uniform of his regiment?" asked the colonel, in a suppressed voice, avoiding the penetrating looks of his companions.

"Oh! the very first," exclaimed the eager girl; "his first offense, I do assure you, if offense it be."

"But you wrote him — you urged the visit; surely, young lady, you wished to see your brother?" added the impatient colonel.

"That we wished it, and prayed for it, — oh, how fervently we prayed for it! — is true; but to have held communion with the royal army would have endangered our father, and we dared not."

"Did he leave the house until taken, or had he intercourse with any out of your own dwelling?"

"With none — no one, excepting our neighbor, the peddler Birch."

"With whom?" exclaimed the colonel, turning pale, and shrinking as from the sting of an adder.

Dunwoodie groaned aloud, and striking his head with his hand, cried, in piercing tones, "He is lost!" and rushed from the apartment.

"But Harvey Birch," repeated Frances, gazing wildly at the door through which her lover had disappeared.

"Harvey Birch!" echoed all the judges. The two immovable members of the court exchanged looks, and threw an inquisitive glance at their prisoner.

"To you, gentlemen, it can be no new intelligence to hear that Harvey Birch is suspected of favoring the royal cause," said Henry, again advancing before the judges; "for he has already been condemned by your tribunals to the fate that I now see awaits myself. I will therefore explain that it was by his assistance I procured the disguise and passed your pickets; but to my dying moment, and with my dying breath, I will avow that my intentions were as pure as the innocent being before you."

"Captain Wharton," said the president, solemnly, "the enemies of American liberty have made mighty and subtle efforts to overthrow our power. A more dangerous man, for

his means and education, is not ranked among our foes than this peddler of Westchester. He is a spy — artful, delusive, and penetrating, beyond the abilities of any of his class. Sir Henry could not do better than to associate him with the officer in his next attempt. He would have saved André. Indeed, young man, this is a connection that may prove fatal to you ! ”

The honest indignation that beamed on the countenance of the aged warrior was met by a look of perfect conviction on the part of his comrades.

“ I have ruined him ! ” cried Frances, clasping her hands in terror ; “ do you desert us ? Then he is lost indeed ! ”

“ Forbear ! lovely innocent, forbear ! ” said the colonel, with strong emotion ; “ you injure none, but distress us all. ”

“ Is it then such a crime to possess natural affection ? ” said Frances, wildly ; “ would Washington — the noble, upright, impartial Washington — judge so harshly ? Delay, till Washington can hear his tale. ”

“ It is impossible, ” said the president, covering his eyes, as if to hide her beauty from his view.

“ Impossible ! Oh ! but for a week suspend your judgment. On my knees I entreat you, as you will expect mercy yourself when no human power can avail you, give him but a day. ”

“ It is impossible, ” repeated the colonel, in a voice that was nearly choked ; “ our orders are peremptory, and too long delay has been given already. ”

He turned from the kneeling suppliant, but could not, or would not, extricate the hand that she grasped with frenzied fervor.

“ Remand your prisoner, ” said one of the judges to the officer who had the charge of Henry. “ Colonel Singleton, shall we withdraw ? ”

“ Singleton ! Singleton ! ” echoed Frances ; “ then you are a father, and know how to pity a father’s woes ; you

cannot, will not, wound a heart that is now nearly crushed. Hear me, Colonel Singleton; as God will listen to your dying prayers, hear me, and spare my brother!"

"Remove her," said the colonel, gently endeavoring to extricate his hand; but none appeared disposed to obey. Frances eagerly strove to read the expression of his averted face, and resisted all his efforts to retire.

"Colonel Singleton! how lately was your own son in suffering and in danger! under the roof of my father he was cherished—under my father's roof he found shelter and protection. Oh! suppose that son the pride of your age, the solace and protection of your infant children, and then pronounce my brother guilty, if you dare!"

"What right has Heath to make an executioner of me!" exclaimed the veteran, fiercely, rising with a face flushed like fire, and every vein and artery swollen with suppressed emotion. "But I forget myself; come, gentlemen, let us mount; our painful duty must be done."

"Mount not! go not!" shrieked Frances; "can you tear a son from his parent—a brother from his sister, so coldly? Is this the cause I have so ardently loved? Are these the men that I have been taught to reverence? But you relent, you do hear me, you will pity and forgive."

"Lead on, gentlemen," said the colonel, motioning towards the door, and erecting himself into an air of military grandeur, in the vain hope of quieting his feelings.

"Lead not on, but hear me," cried Frances, grasping his hand convulsively; "Colonel Singleton, you are a father!—pity—mercy—mercy for the son! mercy for the daughter! Yes—you had a daughter. On this bosom she poured out her last breath; these hands closed her eyes; these very hands, that are now clasped in prayer, did those offices for her that you condemn my poor, poor brother to require."

One mighty emotion the veteran struggled with, and

quelled, but with a groan that shook his whole frame. He even looked around in conscious pride at his victory; but a second burst of feeling conquered. His head, white with the frost of seventy winters, sank upon the shoulder of the frantic suppliant. The sword that had been his companion in so many fields of blood dropped from his nerveless hand, and as he cried, "May God bless you for the deed!" he wept aloud.

Long and violent was the indulgence that Colonel Singleton yielded to his feelings. On recovering, he gave the senseless Frances into the arms of her aunt, and turning with an air of fortitude to his comrades, he said —

"Still, gentlemen, we have our duty as officers to discharge; our feelings as men may be indulged hereafter. What is your pleasure with the prisoner?"

One of the judges placed in his hand a written sentence, that he had prepared while the colonel was engaged with Frances, and declared it to be the opinion of himself and his companion.

It briefly stated that Henry Wharton had been detected in passing the lines of the American army as a spy, and in disguise. That thereby, according to the laws of war, he was liable to suffer death, and that this court adjudged him to the penalty, recommending him to be executed by hanging before nine o'clock on the following morning.

It was not usual to inflict capital punishments, even on the enemy, without referring the case to the commander in chief for his approbation, or, in his absence, to the officer commanding for the time being. But as Washington held his headquarters at New Windsor, on the western bank of the Hudson, sufficient time was yet before them to receive his answer.

"This is short notice," said the veteran, holding the pen in his hand, in a suspense that had no object; "not a day to fit one so young for heaven?"

"The royal officers gave Hale but an hour," returned his comrade; "we have granted the usual time. But Washington has the power to extend it, or to pardon."

"Then to Washington will I go," cried the colonel, returning the paper with his signature; "and if the services of an old man like me, or that brave boy of mine, entitle me to his ear, I will yet save the youth."

So saying, he departed, full of his generous intentions in favor of Henry Wharton.

The sentence of the court was communicated, with proper tenderness, to the prisoner; and after giving a few necessary instructions to the officer in command, and dispatching a courier to headquarters with their report, the remaining judges mounted, and rode to their own quarters, with the same unmoved exterior, but with the consciousness of the same dispassionate integrity, that they had maintained throughout the trial.

CHAPTER XXVII

A FEW hours were passed by the prisoner, after his sentence was received, in the bosom of his family. Mr. Wharton wept in hopeless despondency over the untimely fate of his son; and Frances, after recovering from her insensibility, experienced an anguish of feeling to which the bitterness of death itself would have been comparatively light. Miss Peyton alone retained a vestige of hope, or presence of mind to suggest what might be proper to be done under their circumstances. The comparative composure of the good aunt arose in no degree from any want of interest in the welfare of her nephew, but it was founded in a kind of instinctive dependence on the character of Washington. He was a native of the same colony with herself; and although his early military services and her frequent visits to the family of her sister, and subsequent establishment at its head, had prevented their ever meeting, still she was familiar with his domestic virtues, and well knew that the rigid inflexibility for which his public acts were distinguished formed no part of his reputation in private life. He was known in Virginia as a consistent, but just and lenient, master; and she felt a kind of pride in associating in her mind her countryman with the man who led the armies, and in a great measure controlled the destinies, of America. She knew that Henry was innocent of the crime for which he was condemned to suffer, and, with that kind of simple faith that is ever to be found in the most ingenuous characters, could not conceive of those constructions and interpretations of law that inflicted punishment without the actual existence of crime. But even her confiding hopes were doomed

to meet with a speedy termination. Towards noon a regiment of militia, that was quartered on the banks of the river, moved up to the ground in front of the house that held our heroine and her family, and deliberately pitched their tents, with the avowed intention of remaining until the following morning, to give solemnity and effect to the execution of a British spy.

Dunwoodie had performed all that was required of him by his orders, and was at liberty to retrace his steps to his expecting squadron, which was impatiently waiting his return to be led against a detachment of the enemy, that was known to be slowly moving up the banks of the river, in order to cover a party of foragers in its rear. He was accompanied by a small party of Lawton's troop, under the expectation that their testimony might be required to convict the prisoner; and Mason, the lieutenant, was in command. But the confession of Captain Wharton had removed the necessity of examining any witnesses on behalf of the people. The major, from an unwillingness to encounter the distress of Henry's friends, and a dread of trusting himself within its influence, had spent the time we have mentioned in walking by himself, in keen anxiety, at a short distance from the dwelling. Like Miss Peyton, he had some reliance on the mercy of Washington, although moments of terrific doubt and despondency were continually crossing his mind. To him the rules of service were familiar, and he was more accustomed to consider his general in the capacity of a ruler than as exhibiting the characteristics of the individual. A dreadful instance had too recently occurred, which fully proved that Washington was above the weakness of sparing another in mercy to himself. While pacing with hurried steps through the orchard, laboring under these constantly recurring doubts, enlivened by transient rays of hope, Mason approached, accoutered completely for the saddle.

"Thinking you might have forgotten the news brought this morning from below, sir, I have taken the liberty to

order the detachment under arms," said the lieutenant, very coolly, cutting down with his sheathed saber the mullein tops that grew within his reach.

"What news?" cried the major, starting.

"Only that John Bull is out in Westchester with a train of wagons, which, if he fills, will compel us to retire through these cursed hills in search of provender. These greedy Englishmen are so shut up on York Island that when they do venture out they seldom leave straw enough to furnish the bed of a Yankee heiress."

"Where did the express leave them, did you say? The intelligence has entirely escaped my memory."

"On the heights above Sing Sing," returned the lieutenant, with no little amazement. "The road below looks like a haymarket, and all the swine are sighing forth their lamentations, as the corn passes them towards Kingsbridge. George Singleton's orderly, who brought up the tidings, says that our horses were holding consultation if they should not go down without their riders, and eat another meal, for it is questionable with them whether they can get a full stomach again. If they are suffered to get back with their plunder, we shall not be able to find a piece of pork at Christmas fat enough to fry itself."

"Peace, with all this nonsense of Singleton's orderly, Mr. Mason," cried Dunwoodie, impatiently; "let him learn to wait the orders of his superiors."

"I beg pardon in his name, Major Dunwoodie," said the subaltern; "but, like myself, he was in error. We both thought it was the order of General Heath to attack and molest the enemy whenever he ventured out of his nest."

"Recollect yourself, Lieutenant Mason," said the major, "or I may have to teach you that your orders pass through me."

"I know it, Major Dunwoodie—I know it; and I am sorry that your memory is so bad as to forget that I never have yet hesitated to obey them."

"Forgive me, Mason," cried Dunwoodie, taking both his hands; "I do know you for a brave and obedient soldier; forget my humor. But this business — Had you ever a friend?"

"Nay, nay," interrupted the lieutenant; "forgive me and my honest zeal. I knew of the orders, and was fearful that censure might fall on my officer. But remain, and let a man breathe a syllable against the corps and every sword will start from the scabbard of itself; besides, they are still moving up, and it is a long road from Croton to Kingsbridge. Happen what may, I see plainly that we shall be on their heels before they are housed again."

"Oh! that the courier was returned from headquarters!" exclaimed Dunwoodie. "This suspense is insupportable."

"You have your wish," cried Mason; "here he is at the moment, and riding like the bearer of good news. God send it may be so, for I can't say that I particularly like myself to see a brave young fellow dancing upon nothing."

Dunwoodie heard but very little of this feeling declaration; for ere half of it was uttered he had leaped the fence and stood before the messenger.

"What news?" cried the major, the moment that the soldier stopped his horse.

"Good!" exclaimed the man; and feeling no hesitation to intrust an officer so well known as Major Dunwoodie, he placed the paper in his hands, as he added, "but you can read it, sir, for yourself."

Dunwoodie paused not to read, but flew, with the elastic spring of joy, to the chamber of the prisoner. The sentinel knew him, and he was suffered to pass without question.

"Oh, Peyton!" cried Frances, as he entered the apartment, "you look like a messenger from heaven! Bring you tidings of mercy?"

"Here, Frances — here, Henry — here, dear cousin Jeanette," cried the youth, as with trembling hands he broke

the seal ; " here is the letter itself, directed to the captain of the guard. But listen — "

All did listen with intense anxiety ; and the pang of blasted hope was added to their misery, as they saw the glow of delight which had beamed on the countenance of the major give place to a look of horror. The paper contained the sentence of the court, and underneath was written these simple words —

" Approved — GEO. WASHINGTON."

" He 's lost, he 's lost ! " cried Frances, sinking into the arms of her aunt.

" My son ! my son ! " sobbed the father ; " there is mercy in heaven if there is none on earth. May Washington never want that mercy he thus denies to my innocent child ! "

" Washington ! " echoed Dunwoodie, gazing around him in vacant horror. " Yes, ' t is the act of Washington himself ; these are his characters ; his very name is here, to sanction the dreadful deed. "

" Cruel, cruel Washington ! " cried Miss Peyton ; " how has familiarity with blood changed his nature ! "

" Blame him not, " said Dunwoodie ; " it is the general, and not the man ; my life on it, he feels the blow he is compelled to inflict. "

" I have been deceived in him, " cried Frances. " He is not the savior of his country, but a cold and merciless tyrant. Oh ! Peyton, Peyton ! how have you misled me in his character ! "

" Peace, dear Frances ; peace for God 's sake ; use not such language. He is but the guardian of the law. "

" You speak the truth, Major Dunwoodie, " said Henry, recovering from the shock of having his last ray of hope extinguished, and advancing from his seat by the side of his father. " I, who am to suffer, blame him not. Every indulgence has been granted me that I can ask. On the verge of the grave I cannot continue unjust. At such a

moment, with so recent an instance of danger to your cause from treason, I wonder not at Washington's unbending justice. Nothing now remains but to prepare for that fate which so speedily awaits me. To you, Major Dunwoodie, I make my first request."

"Name it," said the major, giving utterance with difficulty.

Henry turned, and pointing to the group of weeping mourners near him, he continued—

"Be a son to this aged man; help his weakness, and defend him from any usage to which the stigma thrown upon me may subject him. He has not many friends among the rulers of this country; let your powerful name be found among them."

"It shall."

"And this helpless innocent," continued Henry, pointing to where Sarah sat, unconscious of what was passing, "I had hoped for an opportunity to revenge her wrongs"; a flush of excitement passed over his features; "but such thoughts are evil—I feel them to be wrong. Under your care, Peyton, she will find sympathy and refuge."

"She shall," whispered Dunwoodie.

"This good aunt has claims upon you already; of her I will not speak; but here," taking the hand of Frances, and dwelling upon her countenance with an expression of fraternal affection—"here is the choicest gift of all. Take her to your bosom, and cherish her as you would cultivate innocence and virtue."

The major could not repress the eagerness with which he extended his hand to receive the precious boon; but Frances, shrinking from his touch, hid her face in the bosom of her aunt.

"No, no, no!" she murmured; "none can ever be anything to me who aid in my brother's destruction."

Henry continued gazing at her in tender pity for several moments, before he again resumed a discourse that all felt was most peculiarly his own.

"I have been mistaken, then. I did think, Peyton, that your worth, your noble devotion to a cause that you have been taught to revere, that your kindness to our father when in imprisonment, your friendship for me, — in short, that your character was understood and valued by my sister."

"It is — it is," whispered Frances, burying her face still deeper in the bosom of her aunt.

"I believe, dear Henry," said Dunwoodie, "this is a subject that had better not be dwelt upon now."

"You forget," returned the prisoner, with a faint smile, "how much I have to do, and how little time is left to do it in."

"I apprehend," continued the major, with a face of fire, "that Miss Wharton has imbibed some opinions of me that would make a compliance with your request irksome to her — opinions that it is now too late to alter."

"No, no, no," cried Frances, quickly; "you are exonerated, Peyton — with her dying breath she removed my doubts."

"Generous Isabella!" murmured Dunwoodie; "but still, Henry, spare your sister now; nay, spare even me."

"I speak in pity to myself," returned the brother, gently removing Frances from the arms of her aunt. "What a time is this to leave two such lovely females without a protector! Their abode is destroyed, and misery will speedily deprive them of their last male friend," looking at his father; "can I die in peace with the knowledge of the danger to which they will be exposed?"

"You forget me," said Miss Peyton, shrinking at the idea of celebrating nuptials at such a moment.

"No, my dear aunt, I forget you not, nor shall I, until I cease to remember; but you forget the times and the danger. The good woman who lives in this house has already dispatched a messenger for a man of God, to smooth my passage to another world. Frances, if you would wish me to die in

peace, to feel a security that will allow me to turn my whole thoughts to heaven, you will let this clergyman unite you to Dunwoodie."

Frances shook her head, but remained silent.

"I ask for no joy — no demonstration of a felicity that you will not, cannot feel, for months to come; but obtain a right to his powerful name — give him an undisputed title to protect you —"

Again the maid made an impressive gesture of denial.

"For the sake of that unconscious sufferer," — pointing to Sarah, — "for your sake — for my sake — my sister —"

"Peace, Henry, or you will break my heart," cried the agitated girl; "not for worlds would I at such a moment engage in the solemn vows that you wish. It would render me miserable for life."

"You love him not," said Henry, reproachfully. "I cease to importune you to do what is against your inclinations."

Frances raised one hand to conceal her countenance, as she extended the other towards Dunwoodie, and said earnestly —

"Now you are unjust to me — before, you were unjust to yourself."

"Promise me, then," said Wharton, musing awhile in silence, "that as soon as the recollection of my fate is softened, you will give my friend that hand for life, and I am satisfied."

"I do promise," said Frances, withdrawing the hand that Dunwoodie delicately relinquished without even presuming to press it to his lips.

"Well, then, my good aunt," continued Henry, "will you leave me for a short time alone with my friend? I have a few melancholy commissions with which to intrust him, and would spare you and my sister the pain of hearing them."

"There is yet time to see Washington again," said Miss Peyton, moving towards the door; and then, speaking with

extreme dignity, she continued, "I will go myself; surely he must listen to a woman from his own colony! — and we are in some degree connected with his family."

"Why not apply to Mr. Harper?" said Frances, recollecting the parting words of their guest for the first time.

"Harper!" echoed Dunwoodie, turning towards her with the swiftness of lightning; "what of him? do you know him?"

"It is in vain," said Henry, drawing him aside; "Frances clings to hope with the fondness of a sister. Retire, my love, and leave me with my friend."

But Frances read an expression in the eye of Dunwoodie that chained her to the spot. After struggling to command her feelings, she continued —

"He stayed with us for two days; he was with us when Henry was arrested."

"And — and — did you know him?"

"Nay," continued Frances, catching her breath as she witnessed the intense interest of her lover, "we knew him not; he came to us in the night, a stranger, and remained with us during the severe storm; but he seemed to take an interest in Henry and promised him his friendship."

"What!" exclaimed the youth, in astonishment; "did he know your brother?"

"Certainly; it was at his request that Henry threw aside his disguise."

"But," said Dunwoodie, turning pale with suspense, "he knew him not as an officer of the royal army?"

"Indeed he did," cried Miss Peyton; "and he cautioned us against this very danger."

Dunwoodie caught up the fatal paper, that still lay where it had fallen from his own hands, and studied its characters intently. Something seemed to bewilder his brain. He passed his hand over his forehead, while each eye was fixed on him in dreadful suspense — all feeling afraid to admit those hopes anew that had once been so sadly destroyed.

"What said he? what promised he?" at length Dunwoodie asked, with feverish impatience.

"He bade Henry apply to him when in danger, and promised to requite the son for the hospitality of the father."

"Said he this, knowing him to be a British officer?"

"Most certainly; and with a view to this very danger."

"Then," cried the youth aloud, and yielding to his rapture, "then you are safe—then will I save him; yes, Harper will never forget his word."

"But has he the power?" said Frances; "can he move the stubborn purpose of Washington?"

"Can he! If he cannot," shouted the youth,— "if he cannot, who can? Greene, and Heath, and young Hamilton are nothing, compared to this Harper. But," rushing to his mistress, and pressing her hands convulsively, "repeat to me—you say you have his promise?"

"Surely, surely, Peyton,— his solemn, deliberate promise, knowing all of the circumstances."

"Rest easy," cried Dunwoodie, holding her to his bosom for a moment,— "rest easy, for Henry is safe."

He waited not to explain, but darting from the room, he left the family in amazement. They continued in silent wonder until they heard the feet of his charger, as he dashed from the door with the speed of an arrow.

A long time was spent after this abrupt departure of the youth, by the anxious friends he had left, in discussing the probability of his success. The confidence of his manner had, however, communicated to his auditors something of his own spirit. Each felt that the prospects of Henry were again brightening, and with their reviving hopes they experienced a renewal of spirits, which in all but Henry himself amounted to pleasure; with him, indeed, his state was too awful to admit of trifling, and for a few hours he was condemned to feel how much more intolerable was suspense than even the certainty of calamity. Not so with Frances.

She, with all the reliance of affection, reposed in security on the assurance of Dunwoodie, without harassing herself with doubts that she possessed not the means of satisfying ; but believing her lover able to accomplish everything that man could do, and retaining a vivid recollection of the manner and benevolent appearance of Harper, she abandoned herself to all the felicity of renovated hope.

From the window where she stood, the pass that they had traveled through the Highlands was easily to be seen ; and the mountain which held on its summit the mysterious hut was directly before her. Its side was rugged and barren ; huge and apparently impassable barriers of rocks presenting themselves through the stunted oaks, which, stripped of their foliage, were scattered over its surface. The base of the hill was not half a mile from the house, and the object which attracted the notice of Frances was the figure of a man emerging from behind a rock of remarkable formation, and as suddenly disappearing. This maneuver was several times repeated, as if it were the intention of the fugitive (for such by his air he seemed to be) to reconnoiter the proceedings of the soldiery and assure himself of the position of things on the plain. Notwithstanding the distance, Frances instantly imbibed the opinion that it was Birch. Perhaps this impression was partly owing to the air and figure of the man, but in a great measure to the idea that presented itself on formerly beholding the object at the summit of the mountain. That they were the same figure she was confident, although this wanted the appearance which, in the other, she had taken for the pack of the peddler. Harvey had so connected himself with the mysterious deportment of Harper, within her imagination, that under circumstances of less agitation than those in which she had labored since her arrival she would have kept her suspicions to herself. Frances, therefore, sat ruminating on this second appearance in silence, and endeavoring to trace what possible

connection this extraordinary man could have with the fortunes of her own family. He had certainly saved Sarah, in some degree, from the blow that had partially alighted on her, and in no instance had he proved himself to be hostile to their interests.

After gazing for a long time at the point where she had last seen the figure, in the vain expectation of its reappearance, she turned to her friends in the apartment. Miss Peyton was sitting by Sarah, who gave some slight additional signs of observing what passed, but who still continued insensible either to joy or grief.

"I suppose, by this time, my love, that you are well acquainted with the maneuvers of a regiment," said Miss Peyton; "it is no bad quality in a soldier's wife, at all events."

"I am not a wife yet," said Frances, coloring to the eyes; "and we have little reason to wish for another wedding in our family."

"Frances!" exclaimed her brother, starting from his seat, and pacing the floor in violent agitation, "touch not the chord again, I entreat you. While my fate is uncertain, I would wish to be at peace with all men."

"Then let the uncertainty cease," cried Frances, springing to the door, "for here comes Peyton with the joyful intelligence of your release."

The words were hardly uttered, before the door opened, and the major entered. In his air there was the appearance of neither success nor defeat, but there was a marked display of vexation. He took the hand that Frances, in the fullness of her heart, extended towards him, but instantly relinquishing it, threw himself into a chair, in evident fatigue.

"You have failed," said Wharton, with a bound of his heart, but an appearance of composure.

"Have you seen Harper?" cried Frances, turning pale.

"I have not; I crossed the river in one boat as he must have been coming to this side in another. I returned without delay and traced him for several miles into the Highlands, by the western pass, but there I unaccountably lost him. I have returned here to relieve your uneasiness; but see him I will this night, and bring a respite for Henry."

"But saw you Washington?" asked Miss Peyton.

Dunwoodie gazed at her a moment in abstracted musing, and the question was repeated. He answered gravely, and with some reserve —

"The commander in chief had left his quarters."

"But, Peyton," cried Frances, in returning terror, "if they should not see each other, it will be too late. Harper alone will not be sufficient."

Her lover turned his eyes slowly on her anxious countenance, and dwelling a moment on her features, said, still musing —

"You say that he promised to assist Henry."

"Certainly, of his own accord, and in requital for the hospitality he had received."

Dunwoodie shook his head and began to look grave.

"I like not that word 'hospitality' — it has an empty sound; there must be something more reasonable to tie Harper. I dread some mistake; repeat to me all that passed."

Frances, in a hurried and earnest voice, complied with his request. She related particularly the manner of his arrival at The Locusts, the reception that he received, and the events that passed, as minutely as her memory could supply her with the means. As she alluded to the conversation that occurred between her father and his guest, the major smiled, but remained silent. She then gave a detail of Henry's arrival, and the events of the following day. She dwelt upon the part where Harper had desired her brother to throw aside his disguise, and recounted, with wonderful accuracy, his remarks upon the hazard of the step that the youth had

taken. She even remembered a remarkable expression of his to her brother, "that he was safer from Harper's knowledge of his person than he would be without it." Frances mentioned, with the warmth of youthful admiration, the benevolent character of his deportment to herself, and gave a minute relation of his adieus to the whole family.

Dunwoodie at first listened with grave attention; evident satisfaction followed as she proceeded. When she spoke of herself in connection with their guest, he smiled with pleasure, and as she concluded, he exclaimed, with delight —

"We are safe! — we are safe!"

But he was interrupted, as will be seen in the following chapter.

CHAPTER XXVIII

IN A COUNTRY settled, like these states, by a people who fled their native land and much-loved firesides, victims of consciences and religious zeal, none of the decencies and solemnities of a Christian death are dispensed with, when circumstances will admit of their exercise. The good woman of the house was a strict adherent to the forms of the church to which she belonged ; and having herself been awakened to a sense of her depravity by the ministry of the divine who harangued the people of the adjoining parish, she thought it was from his exhortations only that salvation could be meted out to the short-lived hopes of Henry Wharton. Not that the kind-hearted matron was so ignorant of the doctrines of the religion which she professed, as to depend, theoretically, on mortal aid for protection ; but she had, to use her own phrase, "sat so long under the preaching of good Mr. ——" that she had unconsciously imbibed a practical reliance on his assistance for that which her faith should have taught her could come from the Deity alone. With her, the consideration of death was at all times awful ; and the instant that the sentence of the prisoner was promulgated, she dispatched Cæsar, mounted on one of her husband's best horses, in quest of her clerical monitor. This step had been taken without consulting either Henry or his friends ; and it was only when the services of Cæsar were required on some domestic emergency that she explained the nature of his absence. The youth heard her, at first, with an unconquerable reluctance to admit of such a spiritual guide ; but as our view of the things of this life becomes less vivid, our prejudices

and habits cease to retain their influence; and a civil bow of thanks was finally given in requital for the considerate care of the well-meaning woman.

The black returned early from his expedition, and, as well as could be gathered from his somewhat incoherent narrative, a minister of God might be expected to arrive in the course of the day. The interruption that we mentioned in our preceding chapter was occasioned by the entrance of the landlady. At the intercession of Dunwoodie, orders had been given to the sentinel who guarded the door of Henry's room that the members of the prisoner's family should, at all times, have free access to his apartment; Cæsar was included in this arrangement, as a matter of convenience, by the officer in command; but strict inquiry and examination was made into the errand of every other applicant for admission. The major had, however, included himself among the relatives of the British officer; and one pledge, that no rescue should be attempted, was given in his name for them all. A short conversation was passing between the woman of the house and the corporal of the guard before the door that the sentinel had already opened in anticipation of the decision of his noncommissioned commandant.

"Admit the woman," said Dunwoodie, sternly, observing for the first time that one of his own corps was on post.

The corporal raised his hand to his cap and fell back in silence; the soldier stood to his arms, and the matron entered.

"Here is a reverend gentleman below, come to soothe the parting soul, in the place of our own divine, who is engaged with an appointment that could not be put aside; 't is to bury old Mr. —."

"Show him in," said Henry, with feverish impatience.

"But will the sentinel let him pass? I would not wish a friend of Mr. — to be rudely stopped on the threshold, and he a stranger."

All eyes were now turned on Dunwoodie, who, looking at his watch, spoke a few words with Henry, in an undertone, and hastened from the apartment, followed by Frances. The subject of their conversation was a wish expressed by the prisoner for a clergyman of his own persuasion, and a promise from the major that one should be sent from Fishkill town, through which he was about to pass on his way to the ferry to intercept the expected return of Harper. Mason soon made his bow at the door, and willingly complied with the wishes of the landlady; and the divine was invited to make his appearance accordingly.

The person who was ushered into the apartment, preceded by Cæsar and followed by the matron, was a man beyond the middle age, or who might rather be said to approach the downhill of life. In stature he was above the size of ordinary men, though his excessive leanness might contribute in deceiving as to his height; his countenance was sharp and unbending, and every muscle seemed set in rigid compression. No joy, or relaxation, appeared ever to have dwelt on features that frowned habitually, as if in detestation of the vices of mankind. The brows were beetling, dark, and forbidding, giving the promise of eyes of no less repelling expression; but the organs were concealed beneath a pair of enormous green goggles, through which they glared around with a fierceness that denounced the coming day of wrath. All was fanaticism, uncharitableness, and denunciation. Long, lank hair, a mixture of gray and black, fell down his neck, and in some degree obscured the sides of his face, and, parting on his forehead, fell in either direction in straight and formal screens. On the top of this ungraceful exhibition was laid, impending forward, so as to overhang in some measure the whole fabric, a large hat of three equal cocks. His coat was of a rusty black and his breeches and stockings were of the same color, his shoes without luster and half concealed beneath huge plated buckles.

He stalked into the room, and, giving a stiff nod, took the chair offered him by the black, in dignified silence. For several minutes no one broke this ominous pause in the conversation, Henry feeling a repugnance to his guest that he was vainly endeavoring to conquer, and the stranger himself drawing forth occasional sighs and groans that threatened a dissolution of the unequal connection between his sublimated soul and its ungainly tenement. During this deathlike preparation Mr. Wharton, with a feeling allied to that of his son, led Sarah from the apartment. His retreat was noticed by the divine, who began to hum the air of a popular psalm tune, giving it the full richness of the twang that distinguishes the Eastern¹ psalmody.

"Cæsar," said Miss Peyton, "hand the gentleman some refreshment; he must need it after his ride."

"My strength is not in the things of this life," said the divine, speaking in a hollow, sepulchral voice. "Thrice have I this day held forth in my master's service, and fainted not; still it is prudent to help this frail tenement of clay, for, surely, 'the laborer is worthy of his hire.'"

Opening a pair of enormous jaws, he took a good measure of the proffered brandy, and suffered it to glide downwards, with that sort of facility with which man is prone to sin.

"I apprehend, then, sir, that fatigue will disable you from performing the duties which kindness has induced you to attempt."

"Woman!" exclaimed the stranger, with energy, "when was I ever known to shrink from a duty? But 'judge not, lest ye be judged,' and fancy not that it is given to mortal eyes to fathom the intentions of the Deity."

"Nay," returned the maiden, meekly, and slightly disgusted with his jargon, "I pretend not to judge of either events, or the intentions of my fellow creatures, much less of those of Omnipotence."

¹ By this Cooper means "belonging to New England."

"'Tis well, woman — 'tis well," cried the minister, waving his head with supercilious disdain; "humility becometh thy sex, and lost condition; thy weakness driveth thee on headlong, like 'unto the besom of destruction.'"

Surprised at this extraordinary deportment, but yielding to that habit which urges us to speak reverently on sacred subjects, even when perhaps we had better continue silent, Miss Peyton replied —

"There is a power above that can and will sustain us all in well-doing if we seek its support in humility and truth." The stranger turned a lowering look at the speaker, and then composing himself into an air of self-abasement, he continued in the same repelling tones, "It is not everyone that crieth out for mercy that will be heard. The ways of Providence are not to be judged by men — 'Many are called, but few chosen.' It is easier to talk of humility than to feel it. Are you so humble, vile worm, as to wish to glorify God by your own damnation? If not, away with you for a publican and a Pharisee!"

Such gross fanaticism was uncommon in America, and Miss Peyton began to imbibe the impression that her guest was deranged; but remembering that he had been sent by a well-known divine, and one of reputation, she discarded the idea, and, with some forbearance, observed —

"I may deceive myself in believing that mercy is proffered to all, but it is so soothing a doctrine that I would not willingly be undeceived."

"Mercy is only for the elect," cried the stranger, with an unaccountable energy; "and you are in the 'valley of the shadow of death.' Are you not a follower of idle ceremonies, which belong to the vain church, that our tyrants would gladly establish here, along with their stamp acts and tea laws? Answer me that, woman; and remember that Heaven hears your answer; are you not of that idolatrous communion?"

"I worship at the altars of my fathers," said Miss Peyton, motioning to Henry for silence, "but bow to no other idol than my own infirmities."

"Yes, yes, I know ye, self-righteous and papal as ye are — followers of forms, and listeners to bookish preaching; think you, woman, that holy Paul had notes in his hand to propound the word to the believers?"

"My presence disturbs you," said Miss Peyton, rising; "I will leave you with my nephew and offer those prayers in private that I did wish to mingle with his."

So saying, she withdrew, followed by the landlady, who was not a little shocked, and somewhat surprised, by the intemperate zeal of her new acquaintance; for, although the good woman believed that Miss Peyton and her whole church were on the highroad to destruction, she was by no means accustomed to hear such offensive and open avowals of their fate.

Henry had with difficulty repressed the indignation excited by this unprovoked attack on his meek and unresisting aunt; but as the door closed on her retiring figure, he gave way to his feelings.

"I must confess, sir," he exclaimed with heat, "that in receiving a minister of God, I thought I was admitting a Christian, and one who, by feeling his own weaknesses, knew how to pity the frailties of others. You have wounded the meek spirit of an excellent woman, and I acknowledge but little inclination to mingle in prayer with so intolerant a spirit."

The minister stood erect, with grave composure, following with his eyes, in a kind of scornful pity, the retiring females, and suffered the expostulation of the youth to be given, as if unworthy of his notice. A third voice, however, spoke —

"Such a denunciation would have driven many women into fits; but it has answered the purpose well enough, as it is."

"Who's that?" cried the prisoner, in amazement, gazing around the room in quest of the speaker.

"It is I, Captain Wharton," said Harvey Birch, removing the spectacles, and exhibiting his piercing eyes, shining under a pair of false eyebrows.

"Good Heavens — Harvey!"

"Silence!" said the peddler, solemnly; "'t is a name not to be mentioned, and least of all here, within the heart of the American army." Birch paused and gazed around him for a moment, with an emotion exceeding the base passion of fear, and then continued in a gloomy tone, "There are a thousand halts in that very name, and little hope would there be left me of another escape should I be again taken. This is a fearful venture that I am making; but I could not sleep in quiet, and know that an innocent man was about to die the death of a dog when I might save him."

"No," said Henry, with a glow of generous feeling on his cheek; "if the risk to yourself be so heavy, retire as you came, and leave me to my fate. Dunwoodie is making, even now, powerful exertions in my behalf; and if he meets with Mr. Harper in the course of the night, my liberation is certain."

"Harper!" echoed the peddler, remaining with his hands raised, in the act of replacing the spectacles; "what do you know of Harper? and why do you think he will do you service?"

"I have his promise; you remember our recent meeting in my father's dwelling, and he then gave an unasked promise to assist me."

"Yes — but do you know him? that is — why do you think he has the power? or what reason have you for believing he will remember his word?"

"If there ever was the stamp of truth, or simple, honest benevolence, in the countenance of man, it shone in his," said Henry; "besides, Dunwoodie has powerful friends in

the rebel army, and it would be better that I take the chance where I am than thus to expose you to certain death if detected."

"Captain Wharton," said Birch, looking guardedly around, and speaking with impressive seriousness of manner, "if I fail you, all fail you. No Harper nor Dunwoodie can save your life; unless you get out with me, and that within the hour, you die to-morrow on the gallows of a murderer. Yes, such are their laws; the man who fights, and kills, and plunders is honored; but he who serves his country as a spy, no matter how faithfully, no matter how honestly, lives to be reviled, or dies like the vilest criminal!"

"You forget, Mr. Birch," said the youth, a little indignantly, "that I am not a treacherous, lurking spy, who deceives to betray; but innocent of the charge imputed to me."

The blood rushed over the pale, meager features of the peddler until his face was one glow of fire; but it passed quickly away, and he replied —

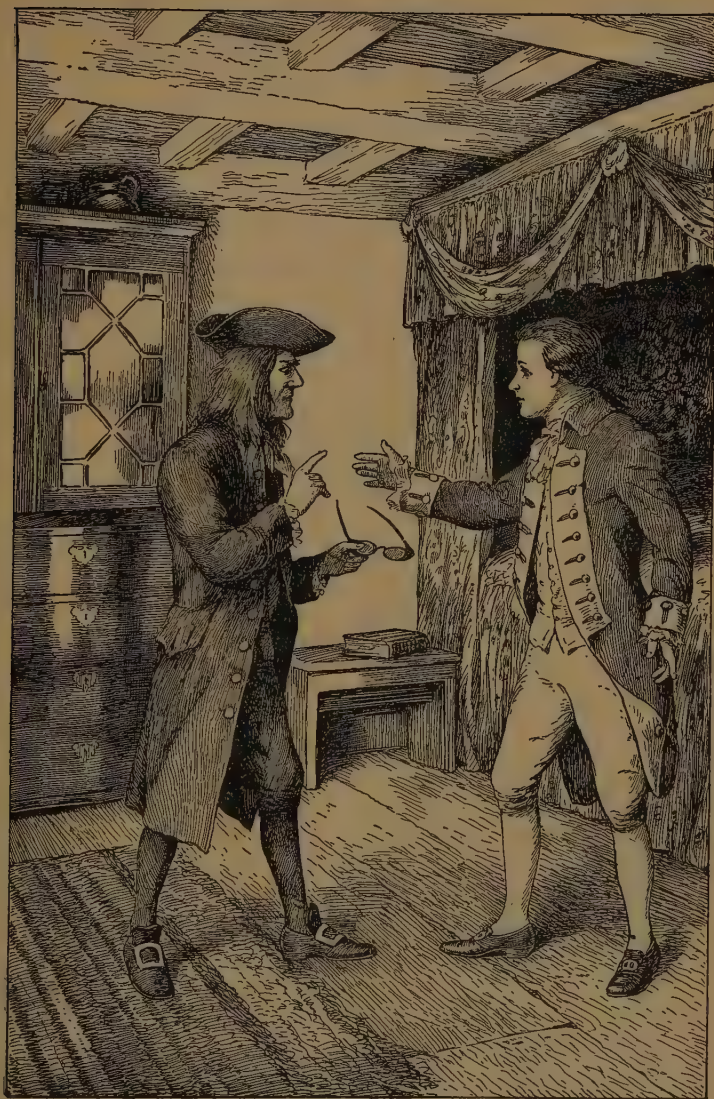
"I have told you truth. Cæsar met me as he was going on his errand this morning, and with him I have laid the plan which, if executed as I wish, will save you — otherwise you are lost; and I again tell you that no other power on earth, not even Washington, can save you."

"I submit," said the prisoner, yielding to his earnest manner, and goaded by the fears that were thus awakened anew.

The peddler beckoned him to be silent, and walking to the door, opened it, with the stiff, formal air with which he had entered the apartment.

"Friend, let no one enter," he said to the sentinel; "we are about to go to prayer, and would wish to be alone."

"I don't know that any will wish to interrupt you," returned the soldier, with a waggish leer of his eye; "but should they be so disposed, I have no power to stop them



if they be of the prisoner's friends; I have my orders and must mind them, whether the Englishman goes to heaven or not."

"Audacious sinner!" said the pretended priest, "have you not the fear of God before your eyes? I tell you, as you will dread punishment at the last day, to let none of the idolatrous communion enter, to mingle in the prayers of the righteous."

"Whew—ew—ew—what a noble commander you'd make for Sergeant Hollister! you'd preach him dumb in a roll call. Harkee, I'll thank you not to make such a noise when you hold forth as to drown our bugles, or you may get a poor fellow a short horn at his grog for not turning out to the evening parade; if you want to be alone, have you no knife to stick over the door-latch, that you must have a troop of horse to guard your meetinghouse?"

The peddler took the hint, and closed the door immediately, using the precaution suggested by the dragoon.

"You overact your part," said young Wharton, in constant apprehension of discovery; "your zeal is too intemperate."

"For a foot soldier and them Eastern militia it might be," said Harvey, turning a bag upside down, that Cæsar now handed him; "but these dragoons are fellows that you must brag down. A faint heart, Captain Wharton, would do but little here; but come, here is a black shroud for your good-looking countenance," taking, at the same time, a parchment mask, and fitting it to the face of Henry. "The master and the man must change places for a season."

"I don't t'ink he look a bit like me," said Cæsar, with disgust, as he surveyed his young master with his new complexion.

"Stop a minute, Cæsar," said the peddler, with the lurking drollery that at times formed part of his manner, "till we get on the wool."

"He worse than ebber now," cried the discontented African. "A t'ink colored man like a sheep! I nebber see sich a lip, Harvey; he most as big as a sausage!"

Great pains had been taken in forming the different articles used in the disguise of Captain Wharton, and when arranged, under the skillful superintendence of the peddler, they formed together a transformation that would easily escape detection from any but an extraordinary observer.

The mask was stuffed and shaped in such a manner as to preserve the peculiarities, as well as the color, of the African visage; and the wig was so artfully formed of black and white wool as to imitate the pepper-and-salt color of Cæsar's own head, and to exact plaudits from the black himself, who thought it an excellent counterfeit in everything but quality.

"There is but one man in the American army who could detect you, Captain Wharton," said the peddler, surveying his work with satisfaction, "and he is just now out of our way."

"And who is he?"

"The man who made you prisoner. He would see your white skin through a plank. But strip, both of you; your clothes must be exchanged from head to foot."

Cæsar, who had received minute instructions from the peddler in their morning interview, immediately commenced throwing aside his coarse garments, which the youth took up and prepared to invest himself with, unable, however, to repress a few signs of loathing.

In the manner of the peddler there was an odd mixture of care and humor; the former was the result of a perfect knowledge of their danger, and the means necessary to be used in avoiding it; and the latter proceeded from the unavoidably ludicrous circumstances before him, acting on an indifference which sprang from habit and long familiarity with such scenes as the present.

"Here, captain," he said, taking up some loose wool and beginning to stuff the stockings of Cæsar, which were already on the leg of the prisoner; "some judgment is necessary in shaping this limb. You will have to display it on horse-back, and the Southern dragoons are so used to the brittle-shins that should they notice your well-turned calf, they'd know at once it never belonged to a black."

"Golly!" said Cæsar, with a chuckle that exhibited a mouth open from ear to ear, "Massa Harry breeches fit."

"Anything but your leg," said the peddler, coolly pursuing the toilet of Henry. "Slip on the coat, captain, over all. Upon my word, you'd pass well at a frolic; and here, Cæsar, place this powdered wig over your curls, and be careful and look out of the window whenever the door is open, and on no account speak, or you will betray all."

"I s'pose Harvey t'ink a colored man an't got a tongue like oder folk," grumbled the black, as he took the station assigned to him.

Everything now was arranged for action, and the peddler very deliberately went over the whole of his injunctions to the two actors in the scene. The captain he conjured to dispense with his erect military carriage, and for a season to adopt the humble paces of his father's negro; and Cæsar he enjoined to silence and disguise, so long as he could possibly maintain them. Thus prepared, he opened the door, and called aloud to the sentinel, who had retired to the farthest end of the passage in order to avoid receiving any of that spiritual comfort which he felt was the sole property of another.

"Let the woman of the house be called," said Harvey, in the solemn key of his assumed character; "and let her come alone. The prisoner is in a happy train of meditation and must not be led from his devotions."

Cæsar sank his face between his hands; and when the soldier looked into the apartment, he thought he saw his

charge in deep abstraction. Casting a glance of huge contempt at the divine, he called aloud for the good woman of the house. She hastened at the summons, with earnest zeal, entertaining a secret hope that she was to be admitted to the gossip of a death-bed repentance.

"Sister," said the minister, in the authoritative tones of a master, "have you in the house 'The Christian Criminal's Last Moments, or Thoughts on Eternity, for Them who Die a Violent Death'?"

"I never heard of the book!" said the matron, in astonishment.

"'T is not unlikely; there are many books you have never heard of; it is impossible for this poor penitent to pass in peace without the consolations of that volume. One hour's reading in it is worth an age of man's preaching."

"Bless me, what a treasure to possess!—when was it put out?"

"It was first put out at Geneva in the Greek language, and then translated at Boston. It is a book, woman, that should be in the hands of every Christian, especially such as die upon the gallows. Have a horse prepared instantly for this black, who shall accompany me to my Brother——, and I will send down the volume yet in season.—Brother, compose thy mind; you are now in the narrow path to glory."

Cæsar wriggled a little in his chair, but he had sufficient recollection to conceal his face with hands that were, in their turn, concealed by gloves. The landlady departed, to comply with this very reasonable request, and the group of conspirators were again left to themselves.

"This is well," said the peddler; "but the difficult task is to deceive the officer who commands the guard—he is lieutenant to Lawton, and has learned some of the captain's own cunning in these things. Remember, Captain Wharton," continued he, with an air of pride, "that now is the moment when everything depends on our coolness."

"My fate can be made but little worse than it is at present, my worthy fellow," said Henry; "but for your sake I will do all that in me lies."

"And wherein can I be more forlorn and persecuted than I now am?" asked the peddler, with that wild incoherence which often crossed his manner. "But I have promised *one* to save you, and to him I never have yet broken my word."

"And who is he?" said Henry, with awakened interest.

"No one."

The man soon returned, and announced that the horses were at the door. Harvey gave the captain a glance, and led the way down the stairs, first desiring the woman to leave the prisoner to himself, in order that he might digest the wholesome mental food that he had so lately received.

A rumor of the odd character of the priest had spread from the sentinel at the door to his comrades; so that when Harvey and Wharton reached the open space before the building, they found a dozen idle dragoons loitering about, with the waggish intention of quizzing the fanatic, and employed in affected admiration of the steeds.

"A fine horse!" said the leader in this plan of mischief, "but a little low in flesh; I suppose from hard labor in your calling."

"My calling may be laborious to both myself and this faithful beast, but then a day of settling is at hand that will reward me for all my outgoings and incomings," said Birch, putting his foot in the stirrup, and preparing to mount.

"You work for pay, then, as we fight for 't?" cried another of the party.

"Even so — 'is not the laborer worthy of his hire?'"

"Come, suppose you give us a little preaching; we have a leisure moment just now, and there's no telling how much good you might do a set of reprobates like us, in a few words; here, mount this horse block, and take your text where you please."

The men now gathered in eager delight around the peddler, who, glancing his eye expressively towards the captain, who had been suffered to mount, replied —

"Doubtless, for such is my duty. But Cæsar, you can ride up the road and deliver the note — the unhappy prisoner will be wanting the book, for his hours are numbered."

"Ay — ay, go along, Cæsar, and get the book," shouted half a dozen voices, all crowding eagerly around the ideal priest, in anticipation of a frolic.

The peddler inwardly dreaded that, in their unceremonious handling of himself and garments, his hat and wig might be displaced, when detection would be certain; he was therefore fain to comply with their request. Ascending the horse block, after hemming once or twice, and casting several glances at the captain, who continued immovable, he commenced as follows :

"I shall call your attention, my brethren, to that portion of Scripture which you will find in the second book of Samuel, and which is written in the following words : 'And the king lamented over Abner, and said, Died Abner as a fool dieth? Thy hands were not bound, nor thy feet put into fetters : as a man falleth before wicked men, so fellest thou. And all the people wept again over him.' Cæsar, ride forward, I say, and obtain the book as directed ; thy master is groaning in spirit even now for the want of it."

"An excellent text!" cried the dragoons. "Go on — go on — let the snowball stay ; he wants to be edified as well as another."

"What are you at there, scoundrels?" cried Lieutenant Mason, as he came in sight from a walk he had taken to sneer at the evening parade of the regiment of militia ; "away with every man of you to your quarters and let me find that each horse is cleaned and littered when I come round." The sound of the officer's voice operated like a

charm, and no priest could desire a more silent congregation, although he might possibly have wished for one that was more numerous. Mason had not done speaking, when it was reduced to the image of Cæsar only. The peddler took that opportunity to mount, but he had to preserve the gravity of his movements, for the remark of the troopers upon the condition of their beasts was but too just, and a dozen dragoon horses stood saddled and bridled at hand, ready to receive their riders at a moment's warning.

"Well, have you bitted the poor fellow within," said Mason, "that he can take his last ride under the curb of divinity, old gentleman?"

"There is evil in thy conversation, profane man," cried the priest, raising his hands, and casting his eyes upward in holy horror; "so I will depart from thee unhurt, as Daniel was liberated from the lions' den."

"Off with you, for a hypocritical, psalm-singing, canting rogue in disguise," said Mason, scornfully; "by the life of Washington! it worries an honest fellow to see such voracious beasts of prey ravaging a country for which he sheds his blood. If I had you on a Virginia plantation for a quarter of an hour, I'd teach you to worm the tobacco with the turkeys."

"I leave you, and shake the dust off my shoes, that no remnant of this wicked hole may tarnish the vestments of the godly."

"Start, or I will shake the dust from your jacket, designing knave! A fellow to be preaching to my men! There's Hollister put the deuce in them by his exhorting; the rascals were getting too conscientious to strike a blow that would rase the skin. But hold! whither do you travel, master blackey, in such godly company?"

"He goes," said the minister, hastily speaking for his companion, "to return with a book of much condolence and virtue to the sinful youth above, whose soul will speedily

become white, even as his outwards are black and unseemly. Would you deprive a dying man of the consolation of religion?"

"No, no, poor fellow, his fate is bad enough; a famous good breakfast his prim body of an aunt gave us. But harkee, Mr. Revelation, if the youth must die, let it be under a gentleman's directions; and my advice is, that you never trust that skeleton of yours among us again, or I will take the skin off and leave you naked."

"Out upon thee for a reviler and scoffer of goodness!" said Birch, moving slowly, and with a due observance of clerical dignity, down the road, followed by the imaginary Cæsar; "but I leave thee, and that behind me that will prove thy condemnation, and take from thee a hearty and joyful deliverance."

"Confound it!" muttered the trooper; "the fellow rides like a stake, and his legs stick out like the cocks of his hat. I wish I had him below these hills, where the law is not overparticular, I'd —"

"Corporal of the guard!—corporal of the guard!" shouted the sentinel in the passage to the chambers, "corporal of the guard!—corporal of the guard!"

The subaltern flew up the narrow stairway that led to the room of the prisoner, and demanded the meaning of the outcry.

The soldier was standing at the open door of the apartment, looking in with a suspicious eye on the supposed British officer. On observing his lieutenant, he fell back with habitual respect, and replied, with an air of puzzled thought—

"I don't know, sir; but just now the prisoner looked queer. Ever since the preacher has left him, he don't look as he used to do—but," gazing intently over the shoulder of his officer, "it must be him, too! There is the same powdered head, and the darn in the coat, where he was hit the day we had the last brush with the enemy."

"And then all this noise is occasioned by your doubting whether that poor gentleman is your prisoner or not, is it, sirrah? Who the dickens do you think it can be else?"

"I don't know who else it can be," returned the fellow, sullenly; "but he has grown thicker and shorter if it is he; and see for yourself, sir, he shakes all over, like a man in an ague."

This was but too true. Cæsar was an alarmed auditor of this short conversation, and, from congratulating himself upon the dexterous escape of his young master, his thoughts were very naturally beginning to dwell upon the probable consequences to his own person. The pause that succeeded the last remark of the sentinel in no degree contributed to the restoration of his faculties. Lieutenant Mason was busied in examining with his own eyes the suspected person of the black, and Cæsar was aware of the fact, by stealing a look through a passage under one of his arms, that he had left expressly for the purpose of reconnoitering. Captain Lawton would have discovered the fraud immediately, but Mason was by no means so quick-sighted as his commander. He therefore turned rather contemptuously to the soldier, and, speaking in an undertone, observed —

"That anabaptist, methodistical, quaker, psalm-singing rascal has frightened the boy, with his farrago about flames and brimstone. I'll step in and cheer him with a little rational conversation."

"I have heard of fear making a man white," said the soldier, drawing back, and staring as if his eyes would start from their sockets, "but it has changed the royal captain to a black!"

The truth was, that Cæsar, unable to hear what Mason uttered in a low voice, and having every fear aroused in him by what had already passed, incautiously removed the wig a little from one of his ears, in order to hear the better, without in the least remembering that its color might prove

fatal to his disguise. The sentinel had kept his eyes fastened on his prisoner, and noticed the action. The attention of Mason was instantly drawn to the same object ; and, forgetting all delicacy for a brother officer in distress, in short, forgetting everything but the censure that might alight on his corps, the lieutenant sprang forward and seized the terrified African by the throat ; for no sooner had Cæsar heard his color named than he knew his discovery was certain ; and at the first sound of Mason's heavy boot on the floor he arose from his seat, and retreated precipitately to a corner of the room.

"Who are you ?" cried Mason, dashing the head of the old man against the angle of the wall at each interrogatory, "who the deuce are you, and where is the Englishman ? Speak, thou thundercloud ! Answer me, you jackdaw, or I'll hang you on the gallows of the spy !"

Cæsar continued firm. Neither the threats nor the blows could extract any reply, until the lieutenant, by a very natural transition in the attack, sent his heavy boot forward in a direction that brought it in direct contact with the most sensitive part of the negro — his shin. The most obdurate heart could not have exacted further patience, and Cæsar instantly gave in. The first words he spoke were —

"Golly ! Massa, you t'ink I got no feelin' ?"

"By Heavens !" shouted the lieutenant, "it is the negro himself ! Scoundrel ! where is your master, and who was the priest ?" While speaking, he made a movement, as if about to renew the attack ; but Cæsar cried aloud for mercy, promising to tell all that he knew.

"Who was the priest ?" repeated the dragoon, drawing back his formidable leg, and holding it in threatening suspense.

"Harvey, Harvey !" cried Cæsar, dancing from one leg to the other, as he thought each member in turn might be assailed.

"Harvey who, you black villain?" cried the impatient lieutenant, as he executed a full measure of vengeance by letting his leg fly.

"Birch!" shrieked Cæsar, falling on his knees, the tears rolling in large drops over his shining face.

"Harvey Birch!" echoed the trooper, hurling the black from him, and rushing from the room. "To arms! to arms! Fifty guineas for the life of the peddler spy—give no quarter to either. Mount, mount! to arms! to horse!"

During the uproar occasioned by the assembling of the dragoons, who all rushed tumultuously to their horses, Cæsar rose from the floor, where he had been thrown by Mason, and began to examine into his injuries. Happily for himself, he had alighted on his head, and consequently sustained no material damage.

CHAPTER XXIX

THE road which it was necessary for the peddler and the English captain to travel, in order to reach the shelter of the hills, lay, for a half mile, in full view from the door of the building that had so recently been the prison of the latter ; running for the whole distance over the rich plain that spreads to the very foot of the mountains, which here rise in a nearly perpendicular ascent from their bases ; it then turned short to the right, and was obliged to follow the windings of nature, as it won its way into the bosom of the Highlands.

To preserve the supposed difference in their stations, Harvey rode a short distance ahead of his companion, and maintained the sober, dignified pace that was suited to his assumed character. On their right the regiment of foot, that we have already mentioned, lay in tents ; and the sentinels who guarded their encampment were to be seen moving with measured tread under the skirts of the hills themselves.

The first impulse of Henry was, certainly, to urge the beast he rode to his greatest speed at once, and not only accomplish his escape but relieve himself from the torturing suspense of his situation. But the forward movement that the youth made for this purpose was instantly checked by the peddler.

" Hold up ! " he cried, dexterously reining his own horse across the path of the other ; " would you ruin us both ? Fall into the place of a black following his master. Did you not see their blooded chargers, all saddled and bridled, standing in the sun before the house ? How long do you

think that miserable Dutch horse you are on would hold his speed if pursued by the Virginians? Every foot that we can gain without giving the alarm counts a day in our lives. Ride steadily after me, and on no account look back. They are as subtle as foxes, ay, and as ravenous for blood as wolves!"

Henry reluctantly restrained his impatience and followed the direction of the peddler. His imagination, however, continually alarmed him with the fancied sounds of pursuit; though Birch, who occasionally looked back under the pretense of addressing his companion, assured him that all continued quiet and peaceful.

"But," said Henry, "it will not be possible for Cæsar to remain long undiscovered. Had we not better put our horses to the gallop, and by the time they can reflect on the cause of our flight we can reach the corner of the woods?"

"Ah! you little know them, Captain Wharton," returned the peddler; "there is a sergeant at this moment looking after us, as if he thought all was not right; the keen-eyed fellow watches me like a tiger lying in wait for his leap. When I stood on the horse block he half suspected that something was wrong. Nay, check your beast—we must let the animals walk a little, for he is laying his hand on the pommel of his saddle. If he mounts, we are gone. The foot soldiers could reach us with their muskets."

"What does he now?" asked Henry, reining his horse to a walk, but at the same time pressing his heels into the animal's sides, to be in readiness for a spring.

"He turns from his charger, and looks the other way; now trot on gently—not so fast—not so fast. Observe the sentinel in the field, a little ahead of us—he eyes us keenly."

"Never mind the footman," said Henry, impatiently; "he can do nothing but shoot us—whereas these dragoons

may make me a captive again. Surely, Harvey, there are horse moving down the road behind us. Do you see nothing particular?"

"Humph!" ejaculated the peddler; "there is something particular, indeed, to be seen behind the thicket on our left. Turn your head a little, and you may see and profit by it, too."

Henry eagerly seized this permission to look aside, and the blood curdled to his heart as he observed that they were passing a gallows, which unquestionably had been erected for his own execution. He turned his face from the sight, in undisguised horror.

"There is a warning to be prudent," said the peddler, in the sententious manner that he often adopted.

"It is a terrific sight, indeed!" cried Henry, for a moment veiling his eyes with his hand, as if to drive a vision from before him.

The peddler moved his body partly around, and spoke with energetic but gloomy bitterness: "And yet, Captain Wharton, you see it where the setting sun shines full upon you; the air you breathe is clear, and fresh from the hills before you. Every step that you take leaves that hated gallows behind; and every dark hollow and every shapeless rock in the mountains offers you a hiding place from the vengeance of your enemies. But I have seen the gibbet raised when no place of refuge offered. Twice have I been buried in dungeons, where, fettered and in chains, I have passed nights in torture, looking forward to the morning's dawn that was to light me to a death of infamy. Four times have I been in their power, besides this last; but—twice—did I think my hour had come. It is hard to die, at the best, Captain Wharton; but to spend your last moments alone and unpitied; to know that none near you so much as think of the fate that is to you the closing of all that is earthly; to think that in a few hours you are to be led

from the gloom, which, as you dwell on what follows, becomes dear to you, to the face of day, and there to meet all eyes fixed upon you, as if you were a wild beast; and to lose sight of everything amidst the jeers and scoffs of your fellow creatures, — that, Captain Wharton, that indeed is to die!”

Henry listened in amazement, as his companion uttered this speech with a vehemence altogether new to him; both seemed to have forgotten their danger and their disguises.

“What! were you ever so near death as that?”

“Have I not been the hunted beast of these hills for three years past?” resumed Harvey; “and once they even led me to the foot of the gallows itself, and I escaped only by an alarm from the royal troops. Had they been a quarter of an hour later, I must have died. ’Twas a dreadful hour, Captain Wharton, and such as you have never known. You have friends to feel for you, but I had none but a father to mourn my loss, when he might hear of it; but there was no pity, no consolation near, to soothe my anguish. Everything seemed to have deserted me. I even thought that *he* had forgotten that I lived.”

“What! did you feel that God himself had forsaken you, Harvey?”

“God never forsakes his servants,” returned Birch, with reverence, and exhibiting naturally a devotion that hitherto he had only assumed.

“And whom did you mean by *he*?”

The peddler raised himself in his saddle to the stiff and upright posture that was suited to his outward appearance. The look of fire, that for a short time glowed on his countenance, disappeared in the solemn lines of unbending self-abasement, and, speaking as if addressing a negro, he replied —

“In heaven there is no distinction of color, my brother; therefore you have a precious charge within you, that you

must hereafter render an account of "; dropping his voice — "this is the last sentinel near the road ; look not back, as you value your life."

Henry remembered his situation, and instantly assumed the humble demeanor of his adopted character. The unaccountable energy of the peddler's manner was soon forgotten in the sense of his own immediate danger ; and with the recollection of his critical situation, returned all the uneasiness that he had momentarily forgotten.

"What see you, Harvey ?" he cried, observing the peddler to gaze towards the building they had left, with ominous interest ; "what see you at the house ?"

"That which bodes no good to us," returned the pretended priest. "Throw aside the mask and wig ; you will need all your senses without much delay ; throw them in the road ; there are none before us that I dread, but there are those behind who will give us a fearful race !"

"Nay, then," cried the captain, casting the implements of his disguise into the highway, "let us improve our time to the utmost. We want a full quarter to the turn ; why not push for it at once ?"

"Be cool ; they are in alarm, but they will not mount without an officer unless they see us fly — now he comes, he moves to the stables ; trot briskly ; a dozen are in their saddles, but the officer stops to tighten his girths ; they hope to steal a march upon us ; he is mounted ; now ride, Captain Wharton, for your life, and keep at my heels. If you quit me, you will be lost !"

A second request was unnecessary. The instant that Harvey put his horse to his speed, Captain Wharton was at his heels, urging the miserable animal he rode to the utmost. Birch had selected his own beast ; and although vastly inferior to the high-fed and blooded chargers of the dragoons, still it was much superior to the little pony that had been thought good enough to carry Cæsar Thompson

on an errand. A very few jumps convinced the captain that his companion was fast leaving him, and a fearful glance thrown behind informed the fugitive that his enemies were as speedily approaching. With that abandonment that makes misery doubly grievous when it is to be supported alone, Henry cried aloud to the peddler not to desert him. Harvey instantly drew up, and suffered his companion to run alongside of his own horse. The cocked hat and wig of the peddler fell from his head the moment that his steed began to move briskly, and this development of their disguise, as it might be termed, was witnessed by the dragoons, who announced their observation by a boisterous shout, that seemed to be uttered in the very ears of the fugitives, so loud was the cry, and so short the distance between them.

"Had we not better leave our horses?" said Henry, "and make for the hills across the fields on our left? — the fence will stop our pursuers."

"That way lies the gallows," returned the peddler; "these fellows go three feet to our two and would mind the fences no more than we do these ruts; but it is a short quarter to the turn, and there are two roads behind the wood. They may stand to choose until they can take the track, and we shall gain a little upon them there."

"But this miserable horse is blown already," cried Henry, urging his beast with the end of his bridle, at the same time that Harvey aided his efforts by applying the lash of a heavy riding whip he carried; "he will never stand it for half a mile farther."

"A quarter will do; a quarter will do," said the peddler; "a single quarter will save us, if you follow my directions."

Somewhat cheered by the cool and confident manner of his companion, Henry continued silently urging his horse forward. A few moments brought them to the desired turn,

and as they doubled round a point of low underbrush the fugitives caught a glimpse of their pursuers scattered along the highway. Mason and the sergeant, being better mounted than the rest of the party, were much nearer to their heels than even the peddler thought could be possible.

At the foot of the hills, and for some distance up the dark valley that wound among the mountains, a thick underwood of saplings had been suffered to shoot up, where the heavier growth was felled for the sake of the fuel. At the sight of this cover, Henry again urged the peddler to dismount, and to plunge into the woods; but his request was promptly refused. The two roads before mentioned met at a very sharp angle at a short distance from the turn, and both were circuitous, so that but little of either could be seen at a time. The peddler took the one which led to the left, but held it only a moment; for, on reaching a partial opening in the thicket, he darted across into the right-hand path, and led the way up a steep ascent, which lay directly before them. This maneuver saved them. On reaching the fork, the dragoons followed the track, and passed the spot where the fugitives had crossed to the other road before they missed the marks of the footsteps. Their loud cries were heard by Henry and the peddler, as their wearied and breathless animals toiled up the hill, ordering their comrades in the rear to ride in the right direction. The captain again proposed to leave their horses and dash into the thicket.

"Not yet, not yet," said Birch, in a low voice; "the road falls from the top of this hill as steep as it rises; first let us gain the top." While speaking they reached the desired summit, and both threw themselves from their horses, Henry plunging into the thick underwood, which covered the side of the mountain for some distance above them. Harvey stopped to give each of their beasts a few severe blows of his whip, that drove them headlong down

the path on the other side of the eminence, and then followed his example.

The peddler entered the thicket with a little caution, and avoided, as much as possible, rustling or breaking the branches in his way. There was but time only to shelter his person from view, when a dragoon led up the ascent; and on reaching the height, he cried aloud —

“I saw one of their horses turning the hill this minute.”

“Drive on; spur forward, my lads,” shouted Mason; “give the Englishman quarter, but cut down the peddler and make an end of him.”

Henry felt his companion grip his arm hard, as he listened in a great tremor to this cry, which was followed by the passage of a dozen horsemen, with a vigor and speed that showed too plainly how little security their over-tired steeds could have afforded them.

“Now,” said the peddler, rising from the cover to reconnoiter, and standing for a moment in suspense, “all that we gain is clear gain; for, as we go up, they go down. Let us be stirring.”

“But will they not follow us and surround this mountain?” said Henry, rising, and imitating the labored but rapid progress of his companion; “remember, they have foot as well as horse, and, at any rate, we shall starve in the hills.”

“Fear nothing, Captain Wharton,” returned the peddler, with confidence; “this is not the mountain that I would be on, but necessity has made me a dexterous pilot among these hills. I will lead you where no man will dare to follow. See, the sun is already setting behind the tops of the western mountains, and it will be two hours to the rising of the moon. Who, think you, will follow us far, on a November night, among these rocks and precipices?”

“Listen!” exclaimed Henry; “the dragoons are shouting to each other; they miss us already.”

"Come to the point of this rock and you may see them," said Harvey, composedly setting himself down to rest. "Nay, they can see us—observe, they are pointing up with their fingers. There! one has fired his pistol, but the distance is too great even for a musket."

"They will pursue us," cried the impatient Henry; "let us be moving."

"They will not think of such a thing," returned the peddler, picking the checkerberries that grew on the thin soil where he sat, and very deliberately chewing them, leaves and all, to refresh his mouth. "What progress could they make here, in their heavy boots and spurs, and long swords? No, no—they may go back and turn out the foot, but the horse pass through these defiles, when they can keep the saddle, with fear and trembling. Come, follow me, Captain Wharton; we have a troublesome march before us, but I will bring you where none will think of venturing this night."

So saying, they both arose, and were soon hid from view among the rocks and caverns of the mountain.

The conjecture of the peddler was true. Mason and his men dashed down the hill, in pursuit, as they supposed, of their victims, but on reaching the bottom lands they found only the deserted horses of the fugitives. Some little time was spent in examining the woods near them and in endeavoring to take the trail on such ground as might enable the horse to pursue, when one of the party descried the peddler and Henry seated on the rock already mentioned.

"He's off," muttered Mason, eying Harvey with fury; "he's off, and we are disgraced. By Heavens, Washington will not trust us with the keeping of a suspected Tory if we let the rascal trifle in this manner with the corps; and there sits the Englishman, too, looking down upon us with a smile of benevolence! I fancy that I can see it. Well, my lad, you are comfortably seated, I will confess, and that

is something better than dancing upon nothing ; but you are not to the west of the Harlem River yet, and I'll try your wind before you tell Sir Henry what you have seen, or I'm no soldier."

"Shall I fire, and frighten the peddler?" asked one of the men, drawing his pistol from the holster.

"Ay, startle the birds from their perch — let us see how they can use the wing." The man fired the pistol, and Mason continued, "'Fore George, I believe the scoundrels laugh at us. But homeward, or we shall have them rolling stones upon our heads, and the Royal Gazettes teeming with an account of a rebel regiment routed by two loyalists. They have told bigger lies than that before now."

The dragoons moved sullenly after their officer, who rode towards their quarters, musing on the course it behooved him to pursue in the present dilemma. It was twilight when Mason's party reached the dwelling, before the door of which were collected a great number of the officers and men, busily employed in giving and listening to the most exaggerated accounts of the escape of the spy. The mortified dragoons gave their ungrateful tidings with the sullen air of disappointed men ; and most of the officers gathered round Mason, to consult of the steps that ought to be taken. Miss Peyton and Frances were breathless and unobserved listeners to all that passed between them, from the window of the chamber immediately above their heads.

"Something must be done, and that speedily," observed the commanding officer of the regiment, which lay encamped before the house ; "this English officer is doubtless an instrument in the great blow aimed at us by the enemy lately ; besides, our honor is involved in his escape."

"Let us beat the woods!" cried several at once ; "by morning we shall have them both again."

"Softly, softly, gentlemen," returned the colonel ; "no man can travel these hills after dark unless used to the passes.

Nothing but horse can do service in this business, and I presume Lieutenant Mason hesitates to move without the orders of his major."

"I certainly dare not," replied the subaltern, gravely shaking his head, "unless you will take the responsibility of an order; but Major Dunwoodie will be back again in two hours, and we can carry the tidings through the hills before daylight; so that by spreading patrols across, from one river to the other, and offering a reward to the country people, their escape will yet be impossible, unless they can join the party that is said to be out on the Hudson."

"A very plausible plan," cried the colonel, "and one that must succeed; but let a messenger be dispatched to Dunwoodie, or he may continue at the ferry until it proves too late; though doubtless the runaways will lie in the mountains to-night."

To this suggestion Mason acquiesced, and a courier was sent to the major with the important intelligence of the escape of Henry, and an intimation of the necessity of his presence to conduct the pursuit. After this arrangement, the officers separated.

When Miss Peyton and her niece first learned the escape of Captain Wharton, it was with difficulty they could credit their senses. While listening to the conversation of the officers, both were struck with the increased danger of Henry's situation, if recaptured, and they trembled to think of the great exertions that would be made to accomplish this object. Miss Peyton consoled herself, and endeavored to cheer her niece, with the probability that the fugitives would pursue their course with unremitting diligence, so that they might reach the Neutral Ground before the horse would carry down the tidings of their flight. The absence of Dunwoodie seemed to her all-important, and the artless lady was anxiously devising some project that might detain her kinsman, and thus give her nephew the longest

possible time. But very different were the reflections of Frances. She could no longer doubt that the figure she had seen on the hill was Birch, and she felt certain that, instead of flying to the friendly forces below, her brother would be taken to the mysterious hut to pass the night.

Frances and her aunt held a long and animated discussion by themselves, when the good spinster reluctantly yielded to the representation of her niece, and folding her in her arms, she kissed her cold cheek and, fervently blessing her, allowed her to depart on an errand of fraternal love.

CHAPTER XXX

THE night had set in dark and chilling, as Frances Wharton, with a beating heart but light step, moved through the little garden that lay behind the farmhouse which had been her brother's prison and took her way to the foot of the mountain, where she had seen the figure of him she supposed to be the peddler. It was still early, but the darkness and the dreary nature of a November evening would, at any other moment or with less inducement to exertion, have driven her back in terror to the circle she had left. Without pausing to reflect, however, she flew over the ground with a rapidity that seemed to bid defiance to all impediments, nor stopped even to breathe, until she had gone half the distance to the rock that she had marked as the spot where Birch made his appearance on that very morning.

The good treatment of their women is the surest evidence that a people can give of their civilization; and there is no nation which has more to boast of in this respect than the Americans. Frances felt but little apprehension from the orderly and quiet troops who were taking their evening's repast on the side of the highway, opposite to the field through which she was flying. They were her countrymen, and she knew that her sex would be respected by the Eastern militia, who composed this body; but in the volatile and reckless character of the Southern horse she had less confidence. Outrages of any description were seldom committed by the really American soldiery; but she recoiled, with exquisite delicacy, from even the appearance of humiliation. When, therefore, she heard the footsteps of a horse moving slowly up the road, she shrank timidly into a little

thicket of wood which grew around the spring that bubbled from the side of a hillock near her. The vidette, for such it proved to be, passed her without noticing her form, which was so enveloped as to be as little conspicuous as possible, humming a low air to himself, and probably thinking of some other fair that he had left on the banks of the Potomac.

Frances listened anxiously to the retreating footsteps of his horse, and, as they died upon her ear, she ventured from her place of secrecy and advanced a short distance into the field, where, startled at the gloom and appalled with the dreariness of the prospect, she paused to reflect on what she had undertaken. Throwing back the hood of her cardinal, she sought the support of a tree, and gazed towards the summit of the mountain that was to be the goal of her enterprise. It rose from the plain like a huge pyramid, giving nothing to the eye but its outlines. The pinnacle could be faintly discerned in front of a lighter background of clouds, between which a few glimmering stars occasionally twinkled in momentary brightness, and then gradually became obscured by the passing vapor that was moving before the wind, at a vast distance below the clouds themselves. Should she return, Henry and the peddler would most probably pass the night in fancied security upon that very hill, towards which she was straining her eyes, in the vain hope of observing some light that might encourage her to proceed. The deliberate, and what to her seemed cold-blooded, project of the officer for the recapture of the fugitives still rang in her ears and stimulated her to go on; but the solitude into which she must venture, the time, the actual danger of the ascent, and the uncertainty of her finding the hut, or, what was still more disheartening, the chance that it might be occupied by unknown tenants, and those of the worst description, urged her to retreat.

The increasing darkness was each moment rendering objects less and less distinct, and the clouds were gathering

more gloomily in the rear of the hill, until its form could no longer be discerned. Frances threw back her rich curls with both hands on her temples, in order to possess her senses in their utmost keenness; but the towering hill was entirely lost to the eye. At length she discovered a faint and twinkling blaze in the direction in which she thought the building stood, that, by its reviving and receding luster, might be taken for the glimmering of a fire. But the delusion vanished, as the horizon again cleared and the star of evening shone forth from a cloud, after struggling hard, as if for existence. She now saw the mountain to the left of the place where the planet was shining, and suddenly a streak of mellow light burst upon the fantastic oaks that were thinly scattered over its summit, and gradually moved down its side, until the whole pile became distinct under the rays of the rising moon. Although it would have been physically impossible for our heroine to advance without the aid of the friendly light, which now gleamed on the long line of level land before her, yet she was not encouraged to proceed. If she could see the goal of her wishes, she could also perceive the difficulties that must attend her reaching it.

While deliberating in distressing incertitude, now shrinking with the timidity of her sex and years from the enterprise, and now resolving to rescue her brother at every hazard, Frances turned her looks towards the east, in earnest gaze at the clouds which constantly threatened to involve her again in comparative darkness. Had an adder stung her, she could not have sprung with greater celerity than she recoiled from the object against which she was leaning, and which she, for the first time, noticed. The two upright posts, with a crossbeam on their tops and a rude platform beneath, told but too plainly the nature of the structure; even the cord was suspended from an iron staple and was swinging to and fro in the night air.

Frances hesitated no longer, but rather flew than ran across the meadow, and was soon at the base of the rock, where she hoped to find something like a path to the summit of the mountain. Here she was compelled to pause for breath, and she improved the leisure by surveying the ground about her. The ascent was quite abrupt, but she soon found a sheep path that wound among the shelving rocks and through the trees, so as to render her labor much less tiresome than it otherwise would have been. Throwing a fearful glance behind, the determined girl commenced her journey upwards. Young, active, and impelled by her generous motive, she moved up the hill with elastic steps, and very soon emerged from the cover of the woods into an open space of more level ground, that had evidently been cleared of its timber for the purpose of cultivation.

Frances felt her spirits invigorated by these faint vestiges of the labor of man, and she walked up the gentle acclivity with renewed hopes of success. The path now diverged in so many different directions that she soon saw it would be useless to follow their windings, and abandoning it, at the first turn, she labored forward towards what she thought was the nearest point of the summit. The cleared ground was soon passed, and woods and rocks, clinging to the precipitous sides of the mountain, again opposed themselves to her progress. Occasionally the path was to be seen running along the verge of the clearing and then striking off into the scattering patches of grass and herbage, but in no instance could she trace it upward. Tufts of wool, hanging to the briers, sufficiently denoted the origin of these tracks, and Frances rightly conjectured that whoever descended the mountain would avail himself of their existence, to lighten the labor. Seating herself on a stone, the wearied girl again paused to rest and to reflect; the clouds were rising before the moon, and the whole scene at her feet lay pictured in the softest colors.

The white tents of the militia were stretched in regular lines immediately beneath her. The light was shining in the window of her aunt, who, Frances easily fancied, was watching the mountain, racked with all the anxiety she might be supposed to feel for her niece. Lanterns were playing about in the stable-yard, where she knew the horses of the dragoons were kept, and believing them to be preparing for their night march, she again sprang upon her feet and renewed her toil.

Our heroine had to ascend more than a quarter of a mile farther, although she had already conquered two thirds of the height of the mountain. But she was now without a path, or any guide to direct her in her course. Fortunately, the hill was conical, like most of the mountains in that range, and, by advancing upwards, she was certain of at length reaching the desired hut, which hung, as it were, on the very pinnacle. Nearly an hour did she struggle with the numerous difficulties that she was obliged to overcome, when, having been repeatedly exhausted with her efforts, and, in several instances, in great danger from falls, she succeeded in gaining the small piece of table-land on the summit.

Faint with her exertions, which had been unusually severe for so slight a frame, she sank on a rock, to recover her strength and fortitude for the approaching interview. A few moments sufficed for this purpose, when she proceeded in quest of the hut. All of the neighboring hills were distinctly visible by the aid of the moon, and Frances was able, where she stood, to trace the route of the highway, from the plains into the mountains. By following this line with her eyes, she soon discovered the point whence she had seen the mysterious dwelling, and directly opposite to that point she well knew the hut must stand.

The chilling air sighed through the leafless branches of the gnarled and crooked oaks, as with a step so light as

hardly to rustle the dry leaves on which she trod, Frances moved forward to that part of the hill where she expected to find this secluded habitation ; but nothing could she discern that in the least resembled a dwelling of any sort. In vain she examined every recess of the rocks, or inquisitively explored every part of the summit that she thought could hold the tenement of the peddler. No hut, nor any vestige of a human being, could she trace. The idea of her solitude struck on the terrified mind of the affrighted girl, and approaching to the edge of a shelving rock, she bent forward to gaze on the signs of life in the vale, when a ray of keen light dazzled her eyes, and a warm air diffused itself over her whole frame. Recovering from her surprise, Frances looked on the ledge beneath her, and at once perceived that she stood directly over the object of her search. A hole through its roof afforded a passage to the smoke, which, as it blew aside, showed her a clear and cheerful fire crackling and snapping on a rude hearth of stone. The approach to the front of the hut was by a winding path around the point of the rock on which she stood, and by this she advanced to its door.

Three sides of this singular edifice, if such it could be called, were composed of logs laid alternately on each other, to a little more than the height of a man ; and the fourth was formed by the rock against which it leaned. The roof was made of the bark of trees, laid in long strips from the rock to its eaves ; the fissures between the logs had been stuffed with clay, which in many places had fallen out, and dried leaves were made use of as a substitute to keep out the wind. A single window of four panes of glass was in front, but a board carefully closed it, in such a manner as to emit no light from the fire within. After pausing some time to view this singularly constructed hiding place, for such Frances well knew it to be, she applied her eye to a crevice to examine the inside. There was no lamp or candle, but the blazing fire of dry wood made the interior of the hut light enough to

read by. In one corner lay a bed of straw, with a pair of blankets thrown carelessly over it, as if left where they had last been used. Against the walls and rock were suspended, from pegs forced into the crevices, various garments, and such as were apparently fitted for all ages and conditions, and for either sex. British and American uniforms hung peaceably by the side of each other ; and on the peg that supported a gown of striped calico, such as was the usual country wear, was also depending a well-powdered wig ; in short, the attire was numerous, and as various as if a whole parish were to be equipped from this one wardrobe.

In the angle against the rock, and opposite to the fire which was burning in the other corner, was an open cupboard, that held a plate or two, a mug, and the remains of some broken meat. Before the fire was a table, with one of its legs fractured, and made of rough boards ; these, with a single stool, composed the furniture, if we except a few articles of cooking. A book that, by its size and shape, appeared to be a Bible was lying on the table, unopened. But it was the occupant of the hut in whom Frances was chiefly interested. This was a man, sitting on the stool, with his head leaning on his hand, in such a manner as to conceal his features, and deeply occupied in examining some open papers. On the table lay a pair of curiously and richly mounted horseman's pistols, and the handle of a sheathed rapier, of exquisite workmanship, protruded from between the legs of the gentleman, one of whose hands carelessly rested on its guard. The tall stature of this unexpected tenant of the hut, and his form, much more athletic than that of either Harvey or her brother, told Frances, without the aid of his dress, that it was neither of those she sought. A close surtout was buttoned high in the throat of the stranger, and parting at his knees, showed breeches of buff, with military boots and spurs. His hair was dressed so as to expose the whole face ; and, after the fashion of that day, it was profusely powdered. A round hat was laid

on the stones that formed a paved floor to the hut, as if to make room for a large map, which, among the other papers, occupied the table.

This was an unexpected event to our adventurer. She had been so confident that the figure twice seen was the peddler that on learning his agency in her brother's escape, she did not in the least doubt of finding them both in the place which, she now discovered, was occupied by another and a stranger. She stood earnestly looking through the crevice, hesitating whether to retire or to wait with the expectation of yet meeting Henry, as the stranger moved his hand from before his eyes, and raised his face, apparently in deep musing, when Frances instantly recognized the benevolent and strongly marked, but composed, features of Harper.

All that Dunwoodie had said of his power and disposition, all that he had himself promised her brother, and all the confidence that had been created by his dignified and paternal manner rushed across the mind of Frances, who threw open the door of the hut, and falling at his feet, clasped his knees with her arms, as she cried —

“Save him — save him — save my brother ; remember your promise, and save him !”

Harper had risen as the door opened, and there was a slight movement of one hand towards his pistols ; but it was cool, and instantly checked. He raised the hood of the cardinal, which had fallen over her features, and exclaimed, with some uneasiness —

“Miss Wharton ! But you cannot be alone ?”

“There is none here but my God and you ; and by his sacred name, I conjure you to remember your promise, and save my brother !”

Harper gently raised her from her knees and placed her on the stool, begging her at the same time to be composed and to acquaint him with the nature of her errand. This Frances instantly did, ingenuously admitting him to a

knowledge of all her views in visiting that lone spot at such an hour, and by herself.

It was at all times difficult to probe the thoughts of one who held his passions in such disciplined subjection as Harper, but still there was a lighting of his thoughtful eye, and a slight unbending of his muscles, as the hurried and anxious girl proceeded in her narrative. His interest, as she dwelt upon the manner of Henry's escape, and the flight to the woods, was deep and manifest, and he listened to the remainder of her tale with a marked expression of benevolent indulgence. Her apprehensions, that her brother might still be too late through the mountains, seemed to have much weight with him, for, as she concluded, he walked a turn or two across the hut, in silent musing.

Frances hesitated, and unconsciously played with the handle of one of the pistols, and the paleness that her fears had spread over her fine features began to give place to a rich tint, as, after a short pause, she added —

"We can depend much on the friendship of Major Dunwoodie, but his sense of honor is so pure that — that — notwithstanding his — his — feelings — his desire to serve us — he will conceive it to be his duty to apprehend my brother again. Besides, he thinks there will be no danger in so doing, as he relies greatly on your interference."

"On mine!" said Harper, raising his eyes in surprise.

"Yes, on yours. When we told him of your kind language, he at once assured us all that you had the power, and, if you had promised, would have the inclination, to procure Henry's pardon."

"Said he more?" asked Harper, who appeared slightly uneasy.

"Nothing but reiterated assurances of Henry's safety; even now he is in quest of you."

"Miss Wharton, that I bear no mean part in the unhappy struggle between England and America, it might



now be useless to deny. You owe your brother's escape, this night, to my knowledge of his innocence, and the remembrance of my word. Major Dunwoodie is mistaken when he says that I might openly have procured his pardon. I now, indeed, can control his fate, and I pledge to you a word which has some influence with Washington, that means shall be taken to prevent his recapture. But from you, also, I exact a promise, that this interview, and all that has passed between us, remain confined to your own bosom, until you have my permission to speak upon the subject." Frances gave the desired assurance, and he continued, "The peddler and your brother will soon be here, but I must not be seen by the royal officer, or the life of Birch might be the forfeiture."

"Never!" cried Frances, ardently; "Henry could never be so base as to betray the man who saved him."

"It is no childish game that we are now playing, Miss Wharton. Men's lives and fortunes hang upon slender threads, and nothing must be left to accident that can be guarded against. Did Sir Henry Clinton know that the peddler had communion with me, and under such circumstances, the life of the miserable man would be taken instantly; therefore, as you value human blood, or remember the rescue of your brother, be prudent, and be silent. Communicate what you know to them both, and urge them to instant departure. If they can reach the last pickets of our army before morning, it shall be my care that there are none to intercept them. There is better work for Major Dunwoodie than to be exposing the life of his friend."

While Harper was speaking, he carefully rolled up the map he had been studying, and placed it, together with sundry papers that were also open, in his pocket. He was still occupied in this manner when the voice of the peddler, talking in unusually loud tones, was heard directly over their heads.

"Stand further this way, Captain Wharton, and you can see the tents, in the moonshine. But let them mount and ride; I have a nest here that will hold us both, and we will go in at our leisure."

"And where is this nest? I confess that I have eaten but little the last two days and I crave some of the cheer you mention."

"Hem!" said the peddler, exerting his voice still more; "hem — this fog has given me a cold; but move slow — and be careful not to slip, or you may land on the bayonet of the sentinel on the flats; 't is a steep hill to rise, but one can go down it with ease."

Harper pressed his finger on his lip, to remind Frances of her promise, and, taking his pistols and hat, so that no vestige of his visit remained, he retired deliberately to a far corner of the hut, where, lifting several articles of dress, he entered a recess in the rock and, letting them fall again, was hid from view. Frances noticed, by the strong fire-light, as he entered, that it was a natural cavity, and contained nothing but a few more articles of domestic use.

The surprise of Henry and the peddler on entering and finding Frances in possession of the hut may be easily imagined. Without waiting for explanations or questions, the warm-hearted girl flew into the arms of her brother, and gave a vent to her emotions in tears. But the peddler seemed struck with very different feelings. His first look was at the fire, which had been recently supplied with fuel; he then drew open a small drawer of the table, and looked a little alarmed at finding it empty.

"Are you alone, Miss Fanny?" he asked, in a quick voice; "you did not come here alone?"

"As you see me, Mr. Birch," said Frances, raising herself from her brother's arms, and turning an expressive glance towards the secret cavern, that the quick eye of the peddler instantly understood.

"But why and wherefore are you here?" exclaimed her astonished brother; "and how knew you of this place at all?"

Frances entered at once into a brief detail of what had occurred at the house since their departure, and the motives which induced her to seek them.

"But," said Birch, "why follow us here, when we were left on the opposite hill?"

Frances related the glimpse that she had caught of the hut and peddler, in her passage through the Highlands, as well as her view of him on that day, and her immediate conjecture that the fugitives would seek the shelter of this habitation for the night. Birch examined her features as, with open ingenuousness, she related the simple incidents that had made her mistress of his secret; and, as she ended, he sprang upon his feet, and striking the window with the stick in his hand, demolished it at a blow.

"'Tis but little luxury or comfort that I know," he said, "but even that little cannot be enjoyed in safety! Miss Wharton," he added, advancing before Fanny, and speaking with the bitter melancholy that was common to him, "I am hunted through these hills like a beast of the forest; but whenever, tired with my toils, I can reach this spot, poor and dreary as it is, I can spend my solitary nights in safety. Will you aid to make the life of a wretch still more miserable?"

"Never!" cried Frances, with fervor; "your secret is safe with me."

"Major Dunwoodie —" said the peddler, slowly, turning an eye upon her that read her soul.

Frances lowered her head upon her bosom for a moment in shame; then, elevating her fine and glowing face, she added, with enthusiasm —

"Never, never, Harvey, as God may hear my prayers!"

The peddler seemed satisfied; for he drew back, and,

watching his opportunity, unseen by Henry, slipped behind the screen and entered the cavern.

Frances and her brother, who thought his companion had passed through the door, continued conversing on the latter's situation for several minutes, when the former urged the necessity of expedition on his part, in order to precede Dunwoodie, from whose sense of duty they knew they had no escape. The captain took out his pocket-book, and wrote a few lines with his pencil; then folding the paper, he handed it to his sister.

"Frances," he said, "you have this night proved yourself to be an incomparable woman. As you love me, give that unopened to Dunwoodie, and remember that two hours may save my life."

"I will—I will; but why delay? Why not fly, and improve these precious moments?"

"Your sister says well, Captain Wharton," exclaimed Harvey, who had reëntered unseen; "we must go at once. Here is food to eat as we travel."

"But who is to see this fair creature in safety?" cried the captain. "I can never desert my sister in such a place as this."

"Leave me! leave me!" said Frances; "I can descend as I came up. Do not doubt me; you know not my courage nor my strength."

"I have not known you, dear girl, it is true; but now, as I learn your value, can I quit you here? Never, never!"

"Captain Wharton," said Birch, throwing open the door, "you can trifle with your own lives, if you have many to spare; I have but one, and must nurse it. Do I go alone, or not?"

"Go, go, dear Henry," said Frances, embracing him; "go; remember our father; remember Sarah." She waited not for his answer, but gently forced him through the door and closed it with her own hands.

For a short time there was a warm debate between Henry and the peddler; but the latter finally prevailed, and the breathless girl heard the successive plunges, as they went down the sides of the mountain at a rapid rate.

Immediately after the noise of their departure had ceased, Harper reappeared. He took the arm of Frances in silence, and led her from the hut. The way seemed familiar to him; for, ascending to the ledge above them, he led his companion across the table-land tenderly, pointing out the little difficulties in their route, and cautioning her against injury.

Frances felt, as she walked by the side of this extraordinary man, that she was supported by one of no common stamp. The firmness of his step and the composure of his manner seemed to indicate a mind settled and resolved. By taking a route over the back of the hill, they descended with great expedition, and but little danger. The distance it had taken Frances an hour to conquer was passed by Harper and his companion in ten minutes, and they entered the open space already mentioned. He struck into one of the sheep paths, and, crossing the clearing with rapid steps, they came suddenly upon a horse, caparisoned for a rider of no mean rank. The noble beast snorted and pawed the earth, as his master approached and replaced the pistols in the holsters.

Harper then turned, and, taking the hand of Frances, spoke as follows:

"You have this night saved your brother, Miss Wharton. It would not be proper for me to explain why there are limits to my ability to serve him; but if you can detain the horse for two hours, he is assuredly safe. After what you have already done, I can believe you equal to any duty. God has denied to me children, young lady; but if it had been his blessed will that my marriage should not have been childless, such a treasure as yourself would I have asked from his mercy. But you are my child; all who dwell in

this broad land are my children, and my care ; and take the blessing of one who hopes yet to meet you in happier days."]

As he spoke, with a solemnity that touched Frances to the heart, he laid his hand impressively upon her head. The guileless girl turned her face towards him and, the hood again falling back, exposed her lovely features to the moonbeams. A tear was glistening on either cheek, and her mild blue eyes were gazing upon him in reverence. Harper bent and pressed a paternal kiss upon her forehead, and continued, "Any of these sheep paths will take you to the plain ; but here we must part — I have much to do, and far to ride ; forget me in all but your prayers."

He then mounted his horse and, lifting his hat, rode towards the back of the mountain, descending at the same time, and was soon hid by the trees. Frances sprang forward with a lightened heart, and taking the first path that led downwards, in a few minutes she reached the plain in safety. While busied in stealing through the meadows towards the house, the noise of horse approaching startled her, and she felt how much more was to be apprehended from man, in some situations, than from solitude. Hiding her form in the angle of a fence near the road, she remained quiet for a moment and watched their passage. A small party of dragoons, whose dress was different from the Virginians, passed at a brisk trot. They were followed by a gentleman, enveloped in a large cloak, whom she at once knew to be Harper. Behind him rode a black in livery, and two youths in uniform brought up the rear. Instead of taking the road that led by the encampment, they turned short to the left and entered the hills.

Wondering who this unknown but powerful friend of her brother could be, Frances glided across the fields and, using due precautions in approaching the dwelling, regained her residence undiscovered and in safety.

CHAPTER XXXI

ON JOINING Miss Peyton, Frances learned that Dunwoodie was not yet returned, although, with a view to relieve Henry from the importunities of the supposed fanatic, he had desired a very respectable divine of their own church to ride up from the river and offer his services. This gentleman was already arrived, and had been passing the half hour he had been there in a sensible and well-bred conversation with the spinster, that in no degree touched upon their domestic affairs.

To the eager inquiries of Miss Peyton, relative to her success in her romantic excursion, Frances could say no more than that she was bound to be silent, and to recommend the same precaution to the good maiden also. There was a smile playing around the beautiful mouth of Frances, while she uttered this injunction, which satisfied her aunt that all was as it should be. She was urging her niece to take some refreshment after her fatiguing expedition, when the noise of a horseman riding to the door announced the return of the major. He had been found by the courier who was dispatched by Mason, impatiently waiting the return of Harper to the ferry, and immediately flew to the place where his friend had been confined, tormented by a thousand conflicting fears. The heart of Frances bounded as she listened to his approaching footsteps. It wanted yet an hour to the termination of the shortest period that the peddler had fixed as the time necessary to effect his escape. Even Harper, powerful and well disposed as he acknowledged himself to be, had laid great stress upon the importance of detaining the Virginians during that hour. She,

however, had not time to rally her thoughts, before Dunwoodie entered one door, as Miss Peyton, with the readiness of female instinct, retired through another.

The countenance of Peyton was flushed, and an air of vexation and disappointment pervaded his manner.

"'T was imprudent, Frances ; nay, it was unkind," he cried, throwing himself in a chair, "to fly at the very moment that I had assured him of safety ! I can almost persuade myself that you delight in creating points of difference in our feelings and duties."

"In our duties there may very possibly be a difference," returned his mistress, approaching, and leaning her slender form against the wall ; "but not in our feelings, Peyton. You must certainly rejoice in the escape of Henry !"

"There was no danger impending. He had the promise of Harper ; and it is a word never to be doubted. Oh ! Frances ! Frances ! had you known the man, you would never have distrusted his assurance ; nor would you have again reduced me to this distressing alternative."

"What alternative ?" asked Frances, pitying his emotions deeply, but eagerly seizing upon every circumstance to prolong the interview.

"What alternative ! am I not compelled to spend this night in the saddle to recapture your brother, when I had thought to lay my head on its pillow, with the happy consciousness of having contributed to his release ? You make me seem your enemy ; I, who would cheerfully shed the last drop of blood in your service. I repeat, Frances, it was rash ; it was unkind ; it was a sad, sad mistake."

She bent towards him, and timidly took one of his hands, while with her other she gently removed the curls from his burning brow.

"Why go at all, dear Peyton ?" she asked. "You have done much for your country, and she cannot exact such a sacrifice as this at your hand."

"Frances! Miss Wharton!" exclaimed the youth, springing to his feet, and pacing the floor with a cheek that burned through its brown covering, and an eye that sparkled with wounded integrity; "it is not my country, but my honor, that requires the sacrifice. Has he not fled from a guard of my own corps? But for this, I might have been spared the blow! But if the eyes of the Virginians are blinded to deception and artifice, their horses are swift of foot, and their sabers keen. We shall see, before to-morrow's sun, who will presume to hint that the beauty of the sister furnished a mask to conceal the brother! Yes, yes; I should like, even now," he continued, laughing bitterly, "to hear the villain who would dare to surmise that such treachery existed!"

"Peyton, dear Peyton," said Frances, recoiling from his angry eye, "you curdle my blood — would you kill my brother?"

"Would I not die for him!" exclaimed Dunwoodie, as he turned to her more mildly; "you know I would; but I am distracted with the cruel surmise to which this step of Henry's subjects me. What will Washington think of me, should he learn that I ever became your husband?"

"If that alone impels you to act so harshly towards my brother," returned Frances, with a slight tremor in her voice, "let it never happen for him to learn."

"And this is consolation, Frances!"

"Nay, dear Dunwoodie, I meant nothing harsh or unkind; but are you not making us both of more consequence with Washington than the truth will justify?"

"I trust that my name is not entirely unknown to the commander in chief," said the major, a little proudly; "nor are you as obscure as your modesty would make you. I believe you, Frances, when you say that you pity me, and it must be my task to continue worthy of such feelings. But I waste the precious moments; we must go through the hills to-night, that we may be refreshed in time for the

duty of to-morrow. Mason is already waiting my orders to mount. Frances, I leave you with a heavy heart ; pity me, but feel no concern for your brother ; he must again become a prisoner, but every hair of his head is sacred."

"Stop! Dunwoodie, I conjure you," cried Frances, gasping for breath, as she noticed that the hand of the clock still wanted many minutes to the desired hour ; "before you go on your errand of fastidious duty, read this note that Henry has left for you, and which, doubtless, he thought he was writing to the friend of his youth."

"Frances, I excuse your feelings ; but the time will come when you will do me justice."

"That time is now," she answered, extending her hand, unable any longer to feign a displeasure that she did not feel.

"Where got you this note?" exclaimed the youth, glancing his eyes over its contents. "Poor Henry, you are indeed my friend! If any one wishes me happiness, it is you!"

"He does, he does," cried Frances, eagerly ; "he wishes you every happiness ; believe what he tells you ; every word is true."

"I do believe him, lovely girl, and he refers me to you for its confirmation. Would that I could trust equally to your affections!"

"You may, Peyton," said Frances, looking up with innocent confidence towards her lover.

"Then read for yourself, and verify your words," interrupted Dunwoodie, holding the note towards her.

Frances received it in astonishment, and read the following :

"Life is too precious to be trusted to uncertainties. I leave you, Peyton, unknown to all but Cæsar, and I recommend him to your mercy. But there is a care that weighs me to the earth. Look at my aged and infirm parent. He will be reproached for the supposed

crime of his son. Look at those helpless sisters that I leave behind me without a protector. Prove to me that you love us all. Let the clergyman whom you will bring with you unite you this night to Frances, and become at once, brother, son, and husband."

The paper fell from the hands of Frances, and she endeavored to raise her eyes to the face of Dunwoodie, but they sank abashed to the floor.

"Am I worthy of this confidence? Will you send me out this night to meet my own brother? or will it be the officer of Congress in quest of the officer of Britain?"

"And would you do less of your duty because I am your wife, Major Dunwoodie? in what degree would it better the condition of Henry?"

"Henry, I repeat, is safe. The word of Harper is his guarantee; but I will show the world a bridegroom," continued the youth, perhaps deceiving himself a little, "who is equal to the duty of arresting the brother of his bride."

"And will the world comprehend this refinement?" said Frances, with a musing air, that lighted a thousand hopes in the bosom of her lover. In fact, the temptation was mighty. Indeed, there seemed no other way to detain Dunwoodie until the fatal hour had elapsed. The words of Harper himself, who had so lately told her that openly he could do but little for Henry, and that everything depended upon gaining time, were deeply engraved upon her memory. Perhaps there was also a fleeting thought of the possibility of an eternal separation from her lover, should he proceed and bring back her brother to punishment. It is difficult at all times to analyze human emotions, and they pass through the sensitive heart of a woman with the rapidity and nearly with the vividness of lightning.

"Why do you hesitate, dear Frances?" cried Dunwoodie, who was studying her varying countenance; "a few minutes might give me a husband's claim to protect you."

Frances grew giddy. She turned an anxious eye to the clock, and the hand seemed to linger over its face, as if with intent to torture her.

"Speak, Frances," murmured Dunwoodie; "may I summon my good kinswoman? determine, for time presses."

She endeavored to reply, but could only whisper something that was inaudible, but which her lover, with the privilege of immemorial custom, construed into assent. He turned and flew to the door, when his mistress recovered her voice.

"Stop, Peyton! I cannot enter into such a solemn engagement with a fraud upon my conscience. I have seen Henry since his escape, and time is all-important to him. Here is my hand; if, with this knowledge of the consequences of delay you will not reject it, it is freely yours."

"Reject it!" cried the delighted youth; "I take it as the richest gift of Heaven. There is time enough for us all. Two hours will take me through the hills; and by noon to-morrow I will return with Washington's pardon for your brother, and Henry will help to enliven our nuptials."

"Then meet me here, in ten minutes," said Frances, greatly relieved by unburdening her mind, and filled with the hope of securing Henry's safety, "and I will return and take those vows which will bind me to you forever."

Dunwoodie paused only to press her once to his bosom, and flew to communicate his wishes to the priest.

Miss Peyton received the avowal of her niece with infinite astonishment, and a little displeasure. It was violating all the order and decorum of a wedding to get it up so hastily, and with so little ceremony. But Frances, with modest firmness, declared that her resolution was taken; she had long possessed the consent of her friends, and their nuptials, for months, had only waited her pleasure. She had now promised Dunwoodie, and it was her wish to comply; more she dared not say without committing herself, by entering into

explanations that might endanger Birch, or Harper, or both. Unused to contention, and really much attached to her kinsman, the feeble objections of Miss Peyton gave way to the firmness of her niece. Mr. Wharton was too completely a convert to the doctrine of passive obedience and non-resistance, to withstand any solicitation from an officer of Dunwoodie's influence in the rebel armies; and the maid returned to the apartment, accompanied by her father and aunt, at the expiration of the time that she had fixed. Dunwoodie and the clergyman were already there. Frances, silently, and without the affectation of reserve, placed in his hand the wedding ring of her own mother, and after some little time spent in arranging Mr. Wharton and herself, Miss Peyton suffered the ceremony to proceed.

The clock stood directly before the eyes of Frances, and she turned many an anxious glance at the dial; but the solemn language of the priest soon caught her attention, and her mind became intent upon the vows she was uttering. The ceremony was quickly over, and as the clergyman closed the words of benediction, the clock told the hour of nine. This was the time that Harper had deemed so important, and Frances felt as if a mighty load was at once removed from her heart.

Dunwoodie folded her in his arms, saluted the mild aunt again and again, and shook Mr. Wharton and the divine repeatedly by the hands. In the midst of the felicitation, a tap was heard at the door. It was opened, and Mason appeared.

"We are in the saddle," said the lieutenant, "and, with your permission, I will lead on; as you are so well mounted, you can overtake us at your leisure."

"Yes, yes, my good fellow; march," cried Dunwoodie, gladly seizing an excuse to linger; "I will reach you at the first halt."

The subaltern retired to execute these orders; he was followed by Mr. Wharton and the divine.

"Now, Peyton," said Frances, "it is indeed a brother that you seek; I am sure I need not caution you in his behalf, should you unfortunately find him."

"Say fortunately," cried the youth; "for I am determined he shall yet dance at my wedding. Would that I could win him to our cause! it is the cause of his country; and I could fight with more pleasure, Frances, with your brother by my side."

"Oh! mention it not! you awaken terrible reflections."

"I will not mention it," returned her husband; "but I must now leave you. But the sooner I go, Frances, the sooner I shall return."

The noise of a horseman was heard approaching the house, and Dunwoodie was yet taking leave of his bride and her aunt, when an officer was shown into the room by his own man.

The gentleman wore the dress of an aid-de-camp, and the major at once knew him to be one of the military family of Washington.

"Major Dunwoodie," he said, after bowing to the ladies, "the commander in chief has directed me to give you these orders."

He executed his mission, and, pleading duty, took his leave immediately.

"Here, indeed," cried the major, "is an unexpected turn in the whole affair; but I understand it; Harper has got my letter, and already we feel his influence."

"Have you any news affecting Henry?" cried Frances, springing to his side.

"Listen, and you shall judge."

"Sir:

"Upon the receipt of this, you will concentrate your squadron, so as to be in front of a covering party which the enemy has sent up in front of his foragers, by ten o'clock to-morrow, on the heights of Croton, where you will find a body of foot to support you. The

escape of the English spy has been reported to me, but his arrest is unimportant compared with the duty I now assign you. You will therefore recall your men, if any are in pursuit, and endeavor to defeat the enemy forthwith.

"Your obedient servant,

"Geo. Washington"

"Thank God!" cried Dunwoodie, "my hands are washed of Henry's recapture; I can now move to my duty with honor."

"And with prudence too, dear Peyton," said Frances, with a face as pale as death; "remember, Dunwoodie, you leave behind you new claims on your life."

The youth dwelt on her lovely but pallid features with rapture, and, as he folded her to his heart, exclaimed—

"For your sake I will, lovely innocent!" Frances sobbed a moment on his bosom, and he tore himself from her presence.

CHAPTER XXXII

THE peddler and his companion soon reached the valley, and after pausing to listen, and hearing no sounds which announced that pursuers were abroad, they entered the highway. Acquainted with every step that led through the mountains, and possessed of sinews inured to toil, Birch led the way, with the lengthened strides that were peculiar to the man and his profession; his pack alone was wanting to finish the appearance of his ordinary business air. After walking at a great rate for three hours, they suddenly diverged from the road, which inclined to the east, and held their course directly across the hills, in a due south direction. This movement was made, the peddler informed his companion, in order to avoid the parties who constantly patrolled in the southern entrance of the Highlands, as well as to shorten the distance by traveling in a straight line. After reaching the summit of a hill, Harvey seated himself by the side of a little run, and opening a wallet, that he had slung where his pack was commonly suspended, he invited his comrade to partake of the coarse fare it contained. Henry had kept pace with the peddler more by the excitement natural to his situation than by the equality of his physical powers. The idea of a halt was unpleasant so long as there existed a possibility of the horse getting below him in time to intercept their retreat through the Neutral Ground. He therefore stated his apprehensions to his companion, and urged a wish to proceed.

"Follow my example, Captain Wharton," said the peddler, commencing his frugal meal; "if the horse have started, it will be more than man can do to head them; and if

they have not, work is cut out for them that will drive all thoughts of you and me from their brains."

"You said yourself that two hours' detention was all-important to us, and if we loiter here, of what use will be the advantage that we may have already obtained?"

"The time is past, and Major Dunwoodie thinks little of following two men when hundreds are waiting for him on the banks of the river."

"Listen!" interrupted Henry; "there are horse at this moment passing the foot of the hill. I hear them even laughing and talking to each other. Hist! there is the voice of Dunwoodie himself; he calls to his comrade in a manner that shows but little uneasiness. One would think that the situation of his friend would lower his spirits; surely Frances could not have given him the letter."

On hearing the first exclamation of the captain, Birch arose from his seat, and approached cautiously to the brow of the hill, taking care to keep his body in the shadow of the rocks, so as to be unseen at any distance, and earnestly reconnoitered the group of passing horsemen. He continued listening, until their quick footsteps were no longer audible, and then quietly returned to his seat, and with incomparable coolness resumed his meal.

"You have a long walk, and a tiresome one, before you, Captain Wharton; you had better do as I do—you were eager for food at the hut above Fishkill, but traveling seems to have worn down your appetite."

"I thought myself safe then, but the information of my sister fills me with uneasiness, and I cannot eat."

"You have less reason to be troubled now than at any time since the night before you were taken, when you refused my advice, and an offer to see you in, in safety," returned the peddler. "Major Dunwoodie is not a man to laugh and be gay when his friend is in difficulty. Come, then, and eat, for no horse will be in our way, if we can

hold our legs for four hours longer, and the sun keeps behind the hills as long as common."

There was a composure in the peddler's manner that encouraged his companion; and having once determined to submit to Harvey's government, he suffered himself to be persuaded into a tolerable supper, if quantity be considered without any reference to the quality. After completing their repast, the peddler resumed his journey.

Henry followed in blind submission to his will. For two hours more they struggled with the difficult and dangerous passes of the Highlands, without road, or any other guide than the moon, which was traveling the heavens, now wading through flying clouds, and now shining brightly. At length they arrived at a point where the mountains sank into rough and unequal hillocks, and passed at once from the barren sterility of the precipices to the imperfect culture of the Neutral Ground.

The peddler now became more guarded in the manner in which they proceeded, and took divers precautions to prevent meeting any moving parties of the Americans. With the stationary posts he was too familiar to render it probable he might fall upon any of them unawares. He wound among the hills and vales, now keeping the highways and now avoiding them, with a precision that seemed instinctive. There was nothing elastic in his tread, but he glided over the ground with enormous strides, and a body bent forward, without appearing to use exertion or know weariness.

The moon had set, and a faint streak of light was beginning to show itself in the east. Captain Wharton ventured to express a sense of fatigue, and to inquire if they were not yet arrived at a part of the country where it might be safe to apply at some of the farmhouses for admission.

"See here," said the peddler, pointing to a hill at a short distance in their rear; "do you not see a man walking

on the point of that rock? Turn, so as to bring the daylight in the range—now, see, he moves, and seems to be looking earnestly at something to the eastward. That is a royal sentinel; two hundred of the rig'lar troops lay on that hill, no doubt sleeping on their arms."

"Then," cried Henry, "let us join them, and our danger is ended."

"Softly, softly, Captain Wharton," said the peddler, dryly, "you've once been in the midst of three hundred of them, but there was a man who could take you out; see you not yon dark body, on the side of the opposite hill, just above the cornstalks? There are the—the rebels (since that is the word for us loyal subjects), waiting only for day, to see who will be master of the ground."

"Nay, then," exclaimed the fiery youth, "I will join the troops of my prince, and share their fortunes, be it good or be it bad."

"You forget that you fight with a halter round your neck; no, no—I have promised one whom I must not disappoint to carry you safe in; and unless you forget what I have already done, and what I have risked for you, Captain Wharton, you will turn and follow me to Harlem."

To this appeal the youth felt unwillingly obliged to submit, and they continued their course towards the city. It was not long before they gained the banks of the Hudson. After searching for a short time under the shore, the peddler discovered a skiff, that appeared to be an old acquaintance, and entering it with his companion, he landed him on the south side of the Croton. Here Birch declared they were in safety; for the royal troops held the continentals at bay, and the former were out in too great strength for the light parties of the latter to trust themselves below that river, on the immediate banks of the Hudson.

Throughout the whole of this arduous flight the peddler had manifested a coolness and presence of mind that nothing

appeared to disturb. All his faculties seemed to be of more than usual perfection, and the infirmities of nature to have no dominion over him. Henry had followed him like a child in leading strings, and he now reaped his reward, as he felt a bound of pleasure at his heart, on hearing that he was relieved from apprehension and permitted to banish every doubt of security.

A steep and laborious ascent brought them from the level of the tidewaters to the high lands, that form, in this part of the river, the eastern banks of the Hudson. Retiring a little from the highway, under the shelter of a thicket of cedars, the peddler threw his form on a flat rock, and announced to his companion that the hour for rest and refreshment was at length arrived. The day was now opened, and objects could be seen in the distance with distinctness. Beneath them lay the Hudson, stretching to the south in a straight line, as far as the eye could reach. To the north, the broken fragments of the Highlands threw upwards their lofty heads, above masses of fog that hung over the water, and by which the course of the river could be traced into the bosom of hills whose conical summits were grouped together, one behind another, in that disorder which might be supposed to have succeeded their gigantic, but fruitless, efforts to stop the progress of the flood. Emerging from these confused piles, the river, as if rejoicing at its release from the struggle, expanded into a wide bay, which was ornamented by a few fertile and low points that jutted humbly into its broad basin. On the opposite, or western, shore the rocks of Jersey were gathered into an array that has obtained for them the name of the "Palisades," elevating themselves for many hundred feet, as if to protect the rich country in their rear from the inroads of the conqueror; but, disdaining such an enemy, the river swept proudly by their feet, and held its undeviating way to the ocean. The rising sun displayed to Henry and

the peddler the square yards and lofty masts of a vessel of war a few miles below them. And as the fog lifted, the whole ship was brought gradually into view.

"There, Captain Wharton," said the peddler, "there is a safe resting place for you; America has no arm that can reach you, if you gain the deck of that ship. She is sent up to cover the foragers and support the troops; the rig'lar officers are fond of the sound of cannon from their shipping."

Without condescending to reply to the sarcasm conveyed in this speech, or perhaps not noticing it, Henry joyfully acquiesced in the proposal, and it was accordingly arranged between them that, as soon as they were refreshed, he should endeavor to get on board the vessel. By following the bank of the river, Birch led the way free from observation, until they reached the point opposite to the frigate, when, by making a signal, a boat was induced to approach. Some time was spent, and much precaution used, before the seamen would trust themselves ashore; but Henry having finally succeeded in making the officer who commanded the party credit his assertions, he was able to rejoin his companions in arms in safety. Before taking leave of Birch, the captain handed him his purse, which was tolerably well supplied for the times; the peddler received it and conveyed it to a part of his dress that was ingeniously contrived to hold such treasures.

The boat pulled from the shore, and Birch turned on his heel, drawing his breath like one relieved, and shot up the hills with the strides for which he was famous.

CHAPTER XXXIII

WHILE the scenes and events that we have recorded were occurring, Captain Lawton led his small party, by slow and wary marches, from the Four Corners to the front of a body of the enemy; where he so successfully maneuvered, for a short time, as completely to elude all their efforts to entrap him, and yet so disguised his own force as to excite the constant apprehension of an attack from the Americans. This forbearing policy, on the side of the partisan, was owing to positive orders received from his commander. When Dunwoodie left his detachment, the enemy were known to be slowly advancing, and he directed Lawton to hover around them, until his own return and the arrival of a body of foot might enable him to intercept their retreat.

The trooper discharged his duty to the letter, but with no little of the impatience that made part of his character when restrained from the attack.

The junction between Lawton and his auxiliaries was made at midnight, and an immediate consultation was held between him and the leader of the foot soldiers. After listening to the statements of the partisan, who rather despised the prowess of his enemy, the commandant of the party determined to attack the British the moment daylight enabled him to reconnoiter their position, without waiting for the aid of Dunwoodie and his horse. So soon as this decision was made, Lawton retired from the building where the consultation was held, and rejoined his own small command.

The few troopers who were with the captain had fastened their horses in a spot adjacent to a haystack, and laid their own frames under its shelter, to catch a few hours' sleep.

But Dr. Sitgreaves, Sergeant Hollister, and Betty Flanagan were congregated at a short distance by themselves, having spread a few blankets upon the dry surface of a rock. Lawton threw his huge frame by the side of the surgeon, and folding his cloak about him, leaned his head upon one hand, and appeared deeply engaged in contemplating the moon as it waded through the heavens.

"Are you ill, John?" said the surgeon, passing his hand along the arm of the captain, until it instinctively settled on his pulse; but the steady, even beat announced neither bodily nor mental malady.

"Sick at heart, Archibald, at the folly of our rulers, in believing that battles are to be fought, and victories won, by fellows who handle a musket as they would a flail; lads who wink when they pull a trigger, and form a line like a hoop-pole. The dependence we place on these men spills the best blood of the country."

The surgeon listened with amazement. It was not the matter, but the manner that surprised him. The trooper had uniformly exhibited, on the eve of battle, an animation, and an eagerness to engage, that was directly at variance with the admirable coolness of his manner at other times. But now there was a despondency in the tones of his voice, and a listlessness in his air, that was entirely different. The operator hesitated a moment, to reflect in what manner he could render this change of service in furthering his favorite system, and then continued —

"It would be wise, John, to advise the colonel to keep at long shot; a spent ball will disable —"

"No!" exclaimed the trooper, impatiently; "let the rascals singe their whiskers at the muzzles of the British muskets, if they can be driven there. But, enough of them. Archibald, do you deem that moon to be a world like this, containing creatures like ourselves?"

"Nothing more probable, dear John; we know its size,

and, reasoning from analogy, may easily conjecture its use. Whether or not its inhabitants have attained to that perfection in the sciences which we have acquired must depend greatly on the state of its society, and in some measure upon its physical influences."

"I care nothing about their learning, Archibald; but 't is a wonderful power that can create such worlds, and control them in their wanderings. I know not why, but there is a feeling of melancholy excited within me as I gaze on that body of light, shaded as it is by your fancied sea and land. It seems to be the resting place of departed spirits! There is a star," continued Lawton, "struggling to glitter through a few driving clouds; perhaps that too is a world, and contains its creatures endowed with reason like ourselves; think you that they know of war and bloodshed?"

"If I might be so bold," said Sergeant Hollister, mechanically raising his hand to his cap, "'t is mentioned in the good book, that the Lord made the sun to stand still while Joshua was charging the enemy, in order, sir, as I suppose, that they might have daylight to turn their flank, or perhaps make a feint in the rear, or some such maneuver. Now, if the Lord would lend them a hand, fighting cannot be sinful. I have often been nonplused, though, to find that they used chariots instead of heavy dragoons, who are, in all comparison, better to break a line of infantry, and who, for the matter of that, could turn such wheel-carriages, and, getting into the rear, play the very dickens with them, horse and all."

"It is because you do not understand the construction of those ancient vehicles, Sergeant Hollister, that you judge of them so erroneously," said the surgeon. "They were armed with sharp weapons that protruded from their wheels, and which broke up the columns of foot, like dismembered particles of matter. I doubt not if similar instruments were affixed to the cart of Mrs. Flanagan that great confusion might be carried into the ranks of the enemy thereby this very day."

"It's but little that the mare would go, and the rig'lars firing at her," grumbled Betty, from under her blanket; "when we got the plunder, the time we drove them through the Jarseys it was, I had to back the baste up to the dead; for niver a foot would she move, forenent the firing, wid her eyes open. Roanoke and Captain Jack are good enough for the redcoats, letting alone myself and the mare."

A long roll of the drums from the hill occupied by the British announced that they were on the alert; and a corresponding signal was immediately heard from the Americans. The bugle of the Virginians struck up its martial tones; and in a few moments both the hills, the one held by the royal troops and the other by their enemies, were alive with armed men. Day had begun to dawn, and preparations were making by both parties to give and to receive the attack. In numbers the Americans had greatly the advantage; but in discipline and equipments the superiority was entirely with their enemies. The arrangements for the battle were brief, and by the time the sun had risen the militia moved forward.

The ground did not admit of the movements of horse; and the only duty that could be assigned to the dragoons was to watch the moment of victory, and endeavor to improve the success to the utmost. Lawton soon got his warriors into the saddle; and leaving them to the charge of Hollister, he rode himself along the line of foot, who, in varied dresses, and imperfectly armed, were formed in a shape that in some degree resembled a martial array. A scornful smile lowered about the lip of the trooper as he guided Roanoke with a skillful hand through the windings of their ranks; and when the word was given to march, he turned the flank of the regiment and followed close in the rear. The Americans had to descend into a little hollow and ascend a hill on its opposite side to approach the enemy.

The descent was made with tolerable steadiness until near

the foot of the hill, when the royal troops advanced in a beautiful line, with their flanks protected by the formation of the ground. The appearance of the British drew a fire from the militia, which was given with good effect, and for a moment staggered the regulars. But they were rallied by their officers, and threw in volley after volley with great steadiness. For a short time the fire was warm and destructive, until the English advanced with the bayonet. This assault the militia had not sufficient discipline to withstand. Their line wavered, then paused, and finally broke into companies and fragments of companies, keeping up at the same time a scattering and desultory fire.

Lawton witnessed these operations in silence, nor did he open his mouth until the field was covered with parties of the flying Americans. Then, indeed, he seemed stung with the disgrace thus heaped upon the arms of his country. Spurring Roanoke along the side of the hill, he called to the fugitives in all the strength of his powerful voice. He pointed to the enemy, and assured his countrymen that they had mistaken the way. There was such a mixture of indifference and irony in his exhortations that a few paused in surprise — more joined them, until, roused by the example of the trooper and stimulated by their own spirit, they demanded to be led against their foe once more.

"Come on, then, my brave friends!" shouted the trooper, turning his horse's head towards the British line, one flank of which was very near him; "come on, and hold your fire until it will scorch their eyebrows."

The men sprang forward, and followed his example, neither giving nor receiving a fire until they had come within a very short distance of the enemy. An English sergeant, who had been concealed by a rock, enraged with the audacity of the officer who thus dared their arms, stepped from behind his cover, and advancing within a few yards of the trooper, leveled his musket.

"Fire, and you die!" cried Lawton, spurring his charger, which leaped forward at the instant. The action and the tone of his voice shook the nerves of the Englishman, who drew his trigger with an uncertain aim. Roanoke sprang with all his feet from the earth and, plunging, fell headlong and lifeless at the feet of his destroyer. Lawton kept his feet, standing face to face with his enemy. The latter presented his bayonet and made a desperate thrust at the trooper's heart. The steel of their weapons emitted sparks of fire, and the bayonet flew fifty feet in the air. At the next moment its owner lay a quivering corpse.

"Come on!" shouted the trooper, as a body of English appeared on the rock and threw in a close fire. "Come on!" he repeated, and brandished his saber fiercely. Then his gigantic form fell backward, like a majestic pine yielding to the ax; but still, as he slowly fell, he continued to wield his saber, and once more the deep tones of his voice were heard uttering, "Come on!"

The advancing Americans paused aghast, and, turning, they abandoned the field to the royal troops.

It was neither the intention nor the policy of the English commander to pursue his success, for he well knew that strong parties of the Americans would soon arrive; accordingly, he only tarried to collect his wounded, and, forming in a square, he commenced his retreat towards the shipping. Within twenty minutes of the fall of Lawton, the ground was deserted by both English and Americans.

Dr. Sitgreaves wandered around the field, casting many a glance of disapprobation at the slight operations that came under his eye; but when, among the flying troops, he found that his comrade and friend was nowhere to be seen, he hastened back to the spot at which Hollister was posted, to inquire if the trooper had returned. Of course the answer was in the negative. Filled with a thousand uneasy conjectures, the surgeon, without regarding, or indeed without at

all reflecting upon any dangers that might lie in his way, strode over the ground at an enormous rate, to the point where he knew the final struggle had been. Once before, the surgeon had rescued his friend from death in a similar situation ; and he felt a secret joy in his own conscious skill, as he perceived Betty Flanagan seated on the ground, holding in her lap the head of a man whose size and dress he knew could belong only to the trooper. As he approached the spot the surgeon became alarmed at the aspect of the washerwoman. Her little black bonnet was thrown aside, and her hair, which was already streaked with gray, hung around her face in disorder.

"John! dear John!" said the doctor, tenderly, as he bent and laid his hand upon the senseless wrist of the trooper, from which it recoiled with an intuitive knowledge of his fate; "John! dear John! where are you hurt?—can I help you?"

"Ye talk to the senseless clay," said Betty, "it's no more will he hear, and it's but little will he mind yee'r probes and yee'r med'cines. Och hone, och hone!—and where will be the liberty now? or who will there be to fight the battle, or gain the day?"

"John!" repeated the surgeon, still unwilling to believe the evidence of his unerring senses, "dear John, speak to me; say what you will, that you do but speak. Oh, God! he is dead; would that I had died with him!"

"There is but little use in living and fighting now," said Betty; "both him and the baste! see, there is the poor cratur, and here is the master! I fed the horse with my own hands the day; and the last male that *he* ate was of my own cooking. Och hone! och hone!—that Captain Jack should live to be killed by the rig'lars!"

The doctor buried his face in his hands, and for several minutes sat yielding to an ungovernable burst of sorrow; while the washerwoman gave vent to her grief in words.

"And who'll there be to incourage the boys now?" she said. "Oh! Captain Jack! Captain Jack! ye was the sowl of the troop, and it was but little we know'd of the danger, and ye fighting. Och! he's gone, he's gone; and the liberty is gone wid him."

A thundering sound of horses' feet came rolling along the road which led near the place where Lawton lay, and directly the whole body of Virginians appeared, with Dunwoodie at their head. The instant that he saw the body he halted the squadron, and dismounting, approached the spot. The countenance of Lawton was not in the least distorted, but the angry frown which had lowered over his brow during the battle was fixed even in death. His frame was composed, and stretched as in sleep. Dunwoodie took hold of his hand, and gazed a moment in silence; his own dark eye kindled, and the paleness which had overspread his features was succeeded by a spot of deep red in either cheek.

"With his own sword will I avenge him!" he cried, endeavoring to take the weapon from the hand of Lawton; but the grasp resisted his utmost strength. "It shall be buried with him. Sitgreaves, take care of our friend, while I revenge his death."

The major hastened back to his charger, and led the way in pursuit of the enemy.

While Dunwoodie had been thus engaged, the body of Lawton lay in open view of the whole squadron. He was a universal favorite, and the sight inflamed the men to the utmost; neither officers nor soldiers possessed that coolness which is necessary to insure success in military operations; but they spurred ardently after their enemies, burning with a wish for vengeance.

The English were formed in a hollow square, which contained their wounded, who were far from numerous, and were marching steadily across a very uneven country as the dragoons approached. The horse charged in column, and

were led by Dunwoodie, who, burning with revenge, thought to ride through their ranks, and scatter them at a blow. But the enemy knew their own strength too well, and, standing firm, they received the charge on the points of their bayonets. The horses of the Virginians recoiled, and the rear rank of the foot throwing in a close fire, the major, with a few men, fell. The English continued their retreat the moment they were extricated from their assailants; and Dunwoodie, who was severely, but not dangerously wounded, recalled his men from further attempts, which, in that stony country, must necessarily be fruitless.

The dragoons retired slowly through the hills, conveying their wounded commander and the body of Lawton. The latter they interred under the ramparts of one of the Highland forts, and the former they consigned to the tender care of his afflicted bride.

Many weeks were gone before the major was restored to sufficient strength to be removed. During those weeks, how often did he bless the moment that gave him a right to the services of his beautiful nurse! She hung around his couch with fond attention; administered with her own hands every prescription of the indefatigable Sitgreaves, and grew each hour in the affections and esteem of her husband. An order from Washington soon sent the troops into winter quarters, and permission was given to Dunwoodie to repair to his own plantation, with the rank of lieutenant colonel, in order to complete the restoration of his health. Captain Singleton made one of the party; and the whole family retired from the active scenes of the war to the ease and plenty of the major's own estate. Before leaving Fishkill, however, letters were conveyed to them, through an unknown hand, acquainting them with Henry's safety and good health; and also that Colonel Wellmere had left the continent for his native island, lowered in the estimation of every honest man in the royal army.

CHAPTER XXXIV

THE commencement of the following year was passed, on the part of the Americans, in making great preparations, in conjunction with their allies, to bring the war to a close. In the South, Greene and Rawdon made a bloody campaign, that was highly honorable to the troops of the latter, but which, by terminating entirely to the advantage of the former, proved him to be the better general of the two.

New York was the point that was threatened by the allied armies; and Washington, by exciting a constant apprehension for the safety of that city, prevented such reënforcements from being sent to Cornwallis as would have enabled him to improve his success.

At length, as autumn approached, every indication was given that the final moment had arrived.

The French forces drew near to the royal lines, passing through the Neutral Ground, and threatened an attack in the direction of Kingsbridge, while large bodies of Americans were acting in concert. By hovering around the British posts and drawing nigh in the Jerseys they seemed to threaten the royal forces from that quarter also. The preparations partook of the nature of both a siege and a storm. But Sir Henry Clinton, in the possession of intercepted letters from Washington, rested securely within his lines, and cautiously disregarded the solicitations of Cornwallis for succor.

It was at the close of a stormy day in the month of September that a large assemblage of officers was collected near the door of a building that was situated in the heart of the American troops, who held the Jerseys. The age, the dress, and the dignity of deportment of most of these

THE SPY

warriors indicated them to be of high rank ; but to one in particular was paid a deference and obedience that announced him to be of the highest. His dress was plain, but it bore the usual military distinctions of command. He was mounted on a noble animal, of a deep bay ; and a group of young men, in gayer attire, evidently awaited his pleasure, and did his bidding. Many a hat was lifted as its owner addressed this officer ; and when he spoke, a profound attention, exceeding the respect of mere professional etiquette, was exhibited on every countenance. At length the general raised his own hat, and bowed gravely to all around him. The salute was returned, and the party dispersed, leaving the officer without a single attendant, except his body servants and one aid-de-camp. Dismounting, he stepped back a few paces, and for a moment viewed the condition of his horse with the eye of one who well understood the animal, and then, casting a brief but expressive glance at his aid, he retired into the building, followed by that gentleman.

On entering an apartment that was apparently fitted for his reception, he took a seat, and continued for a long time in a thoughtful attitude, like one in the habit of communing much with himself. During this silence the aid-de-camp stood in expectation of his orders. At length the general raised his eyes, and spoke in those low placid tones that seemed natural to him.

"Has the man whom I wished to see arrived, sir ?"

"He waits the pleasure of your excellency."

"I will receive him here, and alone, if you please."

The aid bowed and withdrew. In a few minutes the door again opened, and a figure, gliding into the apartment, stood modestly at a distance from the general, without speaking. His entrance was unheard by the officer, who sat gazing at the fire, still absorbed in his own meditations. Several minutes passed, when he spoke to himself in an undertone —

"To-morrow we must raise the curtain and expose our plans. May Heaven prosper them !"

A slight movement made by the stranger caught his ear, and he turned his head and saw that he was not alone. He pointed silently to the fire, towards which the figure advanced, although the multitude of his garments, which seemed more calculated for disguise than comfort, rendered its warmth unnecessary. A second mild and courteous gesture motioned to a vacant chair, but the stranger refused it with a modest acknowledgment. Another pause followed, and continued for some time. At length the officer arose, and opening a desk that was laid upon the table near which he sat, took from it a small but apparently heavy bag.

"Harvey Birch," he said, turning to the stranger, "the time has arrived when our connection must cease; henceforth and forever we must be strangers."

The peddler dropped the folds of the greatcoat that concealed his features, and gazed for a moment earnestly at the face of the speaker; then dropping his head upon his bosom, he said meekly —

"If it be your excellency's pleasure."

"It is necessary. Since I have filled the station which I now hold, it has become my duty to know many men who, like yourself, have been my instruments in procuring intelligence. You have I trusted more than all; I early saw in you a regard to truth and principle that, I am pleased to say, has never deceived me — you alone know my secret agents in the city, and on your fidelity depend not only their fortunes but their lives."

He paused, as if to reflect, in order that full justice might be done to the peddler, and then continued —

"I believe you are one of the very few that I have employed who have acted faithfully to our cause, and, while you have passed as a spy of the enemy, have never given intelligence that you were not permitted to divulge. To me, and to me only of all the world, you seem to have acted with a strong attachment to the liberties of America."

During this address Harvey gradually raised his head from his bosom, until it reached the highest point of elevation ; a faint tinge gathered in his cheeks, and as the officer concluded, it was diffused over his whole countenance in a deep glow, while he stood proudly, but with eyes that modestly sought the feet of the speaker.

"It is now my duty to pay you for these services ; hitherto you have postponed receiving your reward, and the debt has become a heavy one — I wish not to undervalue your dangers ; here are a hundred doubloons ; you will remember the poverty of our country and attribute to it the smallness of your pay."

The peddler raised his eyes to the countenance of the speaker ; but as the other held forth the money, he moved back, as if refusing the bag.

"It is not much for your services and risks, I acknowledge," continued the general, "but it is all that I have to offer ; at the end of the campaign it may be in my power to increase it."

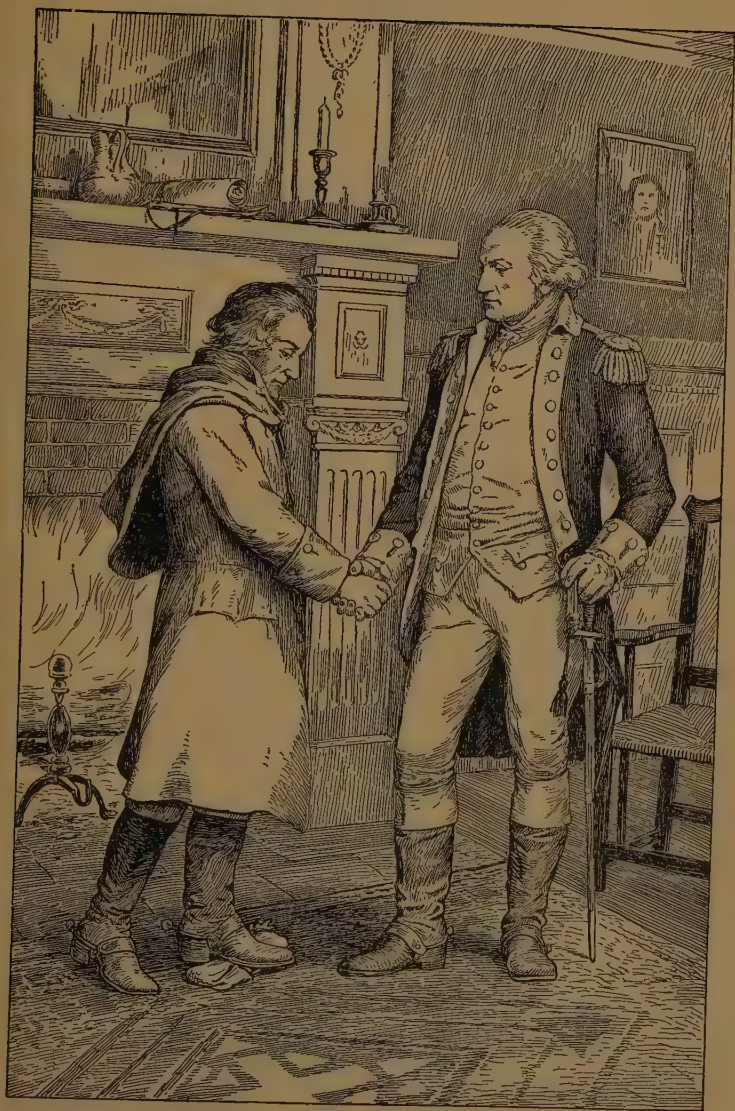
"Does your excellency think that I have exposed my life, and blasted my character, for money?"

"If not for money, what then?"

"What has brought your excellency into the field? For what do you daily and hourly expose your precious life to battle and the halter? What is there about me to mourn, when such men as you risk their all for our country? No, no, no — not a dollar of your gold will I touch ; poor America has need of it all!"

The bag dropped from the hand of the officer, and fell at the feet of the peddler, where it lay neglected during the remainder of the interview. The officer looked steadily at the face of his companion, and continued —

"There are many motives which might govern me that to you are unknown. Our situations are different ; I am known as the leader of armies — but you must descend into



the grave with the reputation of a foe to your native land. Remember that the veil which conceals your true character cannot be raised in years — perhaps never."

Birch again lowered his face, but there was no yielding of the soul in the movement.

"You will soon be old ; the prime of your days is already past ; what have you to subsist on ?"

"These !" said the peddler, stretching forth his hands, that were already embrowned with toil.

"But those may fail you ; take enough to secure a support to your age. Remember your risks and cares. I have told you that the characters of men who are much esteemed in life depend on your secrecy ; what pledge can I give them of your fidelity ?"

"Tell them," said Birch, advancing, and unconsciously resting one foot on the bag, "tell them that I would not take the gold !"

The composed features of the officer relaxed into a smile of benevolence, and he grasped the hand of the peddler firmly.

"Now, indeed, I know you ; and although the same reasons which have hitherto compelled me to expose your valuable life will still exist, and prevent my openly asserting your character, in private I can always be your friend ; fail not to apply to me when in want or suffering, and so long as God giveth to me, so long will I freely share with a man who feels so nobly and acts so well. If sickness or want should ever assail you, and peace once more smile upon our efforts, seek the gate of him whom you have so often met as Harper, and he will not blush to acknowledge you in his true character."

"It is little that I need in this life," said Harvey ; "so long as God gives me health and honest industry, I can never want in this country ; but to know that your excellency is my friend is a blessing that I prize more than all the gold of England's treasury."

The officer stood for a few moments in the attitude of intense thought. He then drew to him the desk, and wrote a few lines on a piece of paper and gave it to the peddler.

"That Providence destines this country to some great and glorious fate I must believe, while I witness the patriotism that pervades the bosoms of her lowest citizens," he said. "It must be dreadful to a mind like yours to descend into the grave, branded as a foe to liberty; but you already know the lives that would be sacrificed, should your real character be revealed. It is impossible to do you justice now, but I fearlessly entrust you with this certificate; should we never meet again, it may be serviceable to your children."

"Children!" exclaimed the peddler, "can I give to a family the infamy of my name!"

The officer gazed at the strong emotion he exhibited with pain, and he made a slight movement towards the gold; but it was arrested by the expression of his companion's face. Harvey saw the intention, and shook his head, as he continued more mildly —

"It is, indeed, a treasure that your excellency gives me; it is safe too. There are men living who could say that my life was nothing to me compared to your secrets. The paper that I told you was lost I swallowed when taken last by the Virginians. It was the only time I ever deceived your excellency, and it shall be the last; yes, this is, indeed, a treasure to me; perhaps," he continued, with a melancholy smile, "it may be known after my death who was my friend; but if it should not, there are none to grieve for me."

"Remember," said the officer, with strong emotion, "that in me you will always have a secret friend; but openly I cannot know you."

"I know it, I know it," said Birch; "I knew it when I took the service. 'Tis probably the last time that I shall

ever see your excellency. May God pour down his choicest blessings on your head!" He paused, and moved towards the door. The officer followed him with eyes that expressed deep interest. Once more the peddler turned, and seemed to gaze on the placid but commanding features of the general with regret and reverence, and then, bowing low, he withdrew.

The armies of America and France were led by their illustrious commander against the enemy under Cornwallis, and terminated a campaign in triumph that had commenced in difficulties. Great Britain soon after became disgusted with the war; and the independence of the States was acknowledged.

CHAPTER XXXV

IT WAS thirty-three years after the interview which we have just related that an American army was once more arrayed against the troops of England ; but the scene was transferred from the banks of the Hudson to those of the Niagara.

The body of Washington had long lain moldering in the tomb ; but as time was fast obliterating the slight impressions of political enmity or personal envy, his name was hourly receiving new luster, and his worth and integrity each moment became more visible, not only to his countrymen, but to the world. He was already the acknowledged hero of an age of reason and truth ; and many a young heart, among those who formed the pride of our army in 1814, was glowing with the recollection of the one great name of America, and inwardly beating with the sanguine expectation of emulating, in some degree, its renown. In no one were these virtuous hopes more vivid than in the bosom of a young officer who stood on the table-rock, contemplating the great cataract, on the evening of the 25th of July of that bloody year. The person of this youth was tall and finely molded, indicating a just proportion between strength and activity ; his deep black eyes were of a searching and dazzling brightness. At times, as they gazed upon the flood of waters that rushed tumultuously at his feet, there was a stern and daring look that flashed from them, which denoted the ardor of an enthusiast. There was another officer standing by the side of this favored youth ; and both seemed, by the interest they betrayed, to be gazing for the first time at the wonder of the western

world. A profound silence was observed by each, until the companion of the officer that we have described suddenly started, and pointing eagerly with his sword into the abyss beneath, exclaimed —

“See! Wharton, there is a man crossing in the very eddies of the cataract, and in a skiff no bigger than an eggshell.”

“He has a knapsack — it is probably a soldier,” returned the other. “Let us meet him at the ladder, Mason, and learn his tidings.”

Some time was expended in reaching the spot where the adventurer was intercepted. Contrary to the expectations of the young soldiers, he proved to be a man far advanced in life, and evidently no follower of the camp. His years might be seventy, and they were indicated more by the thin hairs of silver that lay scattered over his wrinkled brow than by any apparent failure of his system. His frame was meager and bent; but it was the attitude of habit, for his sinews were strung with the toil of half a century. His dress was mean, and manifested the economy of its owner by the number and nature of its repairs. On his back was a scantily furnished pack, that had led to the mistake in his profession. A few words of salutation, and, on the part of the young men, of surprise that one so aged should venture so near the whirlpools of the cataract, were exchanged; when the old man inquired, with a voice that began to manifest the tremor of age, the news from the contending armies.

“We whipped the redcoats here the other day, among the grass on the Chippewa plains,” said the one who was called Mason; “since when, we have been playing hide-and-go-seek with the ships; but we are now marching back from where we started, shaking our heads, and as surly as the Old Nick.”

“Perhaps you have a son among the soldiers,” said his

companion, with a milder demeanor, and an air of kindness; "if so, tell me his name and regiment, and I will take you to him."

The old man shook his head, and, passing his hand over his silver locks, with an air of meek resignation, he answered—

"No; I am alone in the world!"

"You should have added, Captain Dunwoodie," cried his careless comrade, "if you could find either; for nearly half our army has marched down the road, and may be, by this time, under the walls of Fort George for anything that we know to the contrary."

The old man stopped suddenly, and looked earnestly from one of his companions to the other; the action being observed by the soldiers, they paused also.

"Did I hear right?" the stranger uttered, raising his hand to screen his eyes from the rays of the setting sun; "what did he call you?"

"My name is Wharton Dunwoodie," replied the youth, smiling.

The stranger motioned silently for him to remove his hat, which the youth did accordingly, and his fair hair blew aside like curls of silk and opened the whole of his ingenuous countenance to the inspection of the other.

"'T is like our native land!" exclaimed the old man with vehemence, "improving with time;—God has blessed both."

"Why do you stare thus, Lieutenant Mason?" cried Captain Dunwoodie, laughing a little; "you show more astonishment than when you saw the falls."

"Oh, the falls!—they are a thing to be looked at on a moonshiny night, by your aunt Sarah and that gay old bachelor, Colonel Singleton; but a fellow like myself never shows surprise, unless it may be at such a touch as this."

The extraordinary vehemence of the stranger's manner had passed away as suddenly as it was exhibited, but he

listened to this speech with deep interest, while Dunwoodie replied a little gravely —

"Come, come, Tom, no jokes about my good aunt, I beg; she is kindness itself; and I have heard it whispered that her youth was not altogether happy."

"Why, as to rumor," said Mason, "there goes one in Accomac that Colonel Singleton offers himself to her regularly every Valentine's Day; and there are some who add that your old great-aunt helps his suit."

"Aunt Jeanette!" said Dunwoodie, laughing; "dear good soul, she thinks but little of marriage in any shape, I believe, since the death of Dr. Sitgreaves. There were some whispers of a courtship between them formerly, but it ended in nothing but civilities, and I suspect that the whole story arises from the intimacy of Colonel Singleton and my father. You know they were comrades in the horse, as indeed was your own father."

"I know all that, of course; but you must not tell me that the particular, prim bachelor goes so often to General Dunwoodie's plantation merely for the sake of talking old soldier with your father. The last time I was there that yellow, sharp-nosed housekeeper of your mother's took me into the pantry and said that the colonel was no despicable match, as she called it, and how the sale of his plantation in Georgia had brought him — oh, Lord! I don't know how much."

"Quite likely," returned the captain; "Katy Haynes is no bad calculator."

They had stopped during this conversation, in uncertainty whether their new companion was to be left or not.

The old man listened to each word as it was uttered, with the most intense interest but towards the conclusion of the dialogue, the earnest attention of his countenance changed to a kind of inward smile. He shook his head, and, passing his hand over his forehead, seemed to be thinking of

other times. Mason paid but little attention to the expression of his features, and continued —

“To me, she is selfishness embodied!”

“Her selfishness does but little harm,” returned Dunwoodie. “One of her greatest difficulties is her aversion to the blacks. She says that she never saw but one that she liked.”

“And who was he?”

“His name was Cæsar; he was a house-servant of my late grandfather Wharton. You don’t remember him, I believe; he died the same year with his master, while we were children. Katy yearly sings his requiem, and, upon my word, I believe he deserved it. I have heard something of his helping my English uncle, as we call General Wharton, in some difficulty that occurred in the old war. My mother always speaks of him with great affection. Both Cæsar and Katy came to Virginia with my mother when she married. My mother was —”

“An angel!” interrupted the old man, in a voice that startled the young soldiers by its abruptness and energy.

“Did you know her?” cried the son, with a glow of pleasure on his cheek.

The reply of the stranger was interrupted by sudden and heavy explosions of artillery, which were immediately followed by continued volleys of small-arms, and in a few minutes the air was filled with the tumult of a warm and well-contested battle.

The two soldiers hastened with precipitation towards the camp, accompanied by their new acquaintance. The excitement and anxiety created by the approaching fight prevented a continuance of the conversation, and the three held their way to the army, making occasional conjectures on the cause of the fire, and the probability of a general engagement. During their short and hurried walk Captain Dunwoodie, however, threw several friendly glances at the old man, who

moved over the ground with astonishing energy for his years, for the heart of the youth was warmed by an eulogium on a mother that he adored. In a short time they joined the regiment to which the officers belonged, when the captain, squeezing the stranger's hand, earnestly begged that he would make inquiries after him on the following morning and that he might see him in his own tent. Here they separated.

Everything in the American camp announced an approaching struggle. At a distance of a few miles the sound of cannon and musketry was heard above the roar of the cataract. The troops were soon in motion, and a movement made to support the division of the army which was already engaged. Night had set in before the reserve and irregulars reached the foot of Lundy's Lane, a road that diverged from the river and crossed a conical eminence, at no great distance from the Niagara highway. The summit of this hill was crowned with the cannon of the British, and in the flat beneath was the remnant of Scott's gallant brigade, which for a long time had held an unequal contest with distinguished bravery. A new line was interposed, and one column of the Americans directed to charge up the hill, parallel to the road. This column took the English in flank, and, bayoneting their artillerists, gained possession of the cannon. They were immediately joined by their comrades, and the enemy was swept from the hill. But large reënforcements were joining the English general momentarily, and their troops were too brave to rest easy under the defeat. Repeated and bloody charges were made to recover the guns, but in all they were repulsed with slaughter. During the last of these struggles the ardor of the youthful captain whom we have mentioned urged him to lead his men some distance in advance, to scatter a daring party of the enemy. He succeeded, but in returning to the line missed his lieutenant from the station that he ought to have occupied. Soon after this repulse, which was the last, orders were

given to the shattered troops to return to the camp. The British were nowhere to be seen, and preparations were made to take in such of the wounded as could be moved. At this moment Wharton Dunwoodie, impelled by affection for his friend, seized a lighted fusee, and taking two of his men, went himself in quest of his body, where he was supposed to have fallen. Mason was found on the side of the hill, seated with great composure, but unable to walk on account of a fractured leg. Dunwoodie saw and flew to the side of his comrade, exclaiming —

“Ah! dear Tom, I knew I should find you the nearest man to the enemy.”

“Softly, softly; handle me tenderly,” replied the lieutenant; “no, there is a brave fellow still nearer than myself, and who he can be I know not. He rushed out of our smoke, near my platoon, to make a prisoner or some such thing, but, poor fellow, he never came back; there he lies just over the hillock. I have spoken to him several times, but I fancy he is past answering.”

Dunwoodie went to the spot, and to his astonishment beheld the aged stranger.

“It is the old man who knew my mother!” cried the youth; “for her sake he shall have honorable burial; lift him, and let him be carried in; his bones shall rest on native soil.”

The men approached to obey. He was lying on his back, with his face exposed to the glaring light of the fusee; his eyes were closed, as if in slumber; his lips, sunken with years, were slightly moved from their natural position, but it seemed more like a smile than a convulsion which had caused the change. A soldier's musket lay near him; his hands were pressed upon his breast, and one of them contained a substance that glittered like silver. Dunwoodie stooped, and removing the limbs, perceived the place where the bullet had found a passage to his heart. The subject

of his last care was a tin box, through which the fatal lead had gone; and the dying moments of the old man must have passed in drawing it from his bosom. Dunwoodie opened it, and found a paper in which, to his astonishment, he read the following:

"Circumstances of political importance, which involve the lives and fortunes of many, have hitherto kept secret what this paper now reveals. Harvey Birch has for years been a faithful and unrequited servant of his country. Though man does not, may God reward him for his conduct!

"Geo. Washington"

It was the SPY OF THE NEUTRAL GROUND, who died as he had lived, devoted to his country, and a martyr to her liberties.

METHODS OF STUDY

In reading a novel your first aim should be to enjoy it. Remember that novels come to be called "classics" only after they have been liked for years by many people.

A good way to get the most out of your reading of "The Spy" is to select passages, interesting for one thing or another, and read them aloud to the class. Another way is for each of you to prepare questions on the chapters assigned for the day, and, standing before the class, lead the discussion with your questions as basis.

Setting. It is well to start your study of this particular novel by reviewing the outstanding facts of the American Revolution. Be able to locate the battles that were fought near the locality in which the story takes place. How important is the setting in this particular story? Could the story have taken place anywhere else? at any other time? Is Cooper an accurate historian?

Characters. In some novels the characters are more important than the plot or the setting. What is the relative importance of these three elements in "The Spy"? Do the characters belong peculiarly to the time of the Revolution? Do Cooper's characters seem to you to be real individuals or merely types? How does Cooper portray his characters — by describing them, or by having them reveal themselves by what they do and say? Notice which characters are simple, elemental people, with the strong and weak sides of their nature distinct. Are they either all good or all bad? Do you see the characters change and develop under the influence of other characters, of their environment, or of the events of the story? Are there any characters which make a striking contrast to one another? Does Cooper seem particularly interested in any one class of society? Are the "females" in "The Spy" attractive according to our ideas to-day? Harvey Birch is a character original with Cooper. Point out ways in which Cooper has made an apparently ignoble figure heroic.

Plot. "The Spy" is first of all a good story. It is this characteristic which has made it a favorite with many young people. In this novel Cooper is interested in history and romance. Pick out passages in which Cooper throws the glamor of romance over the events and the people of the time of the Revolution. Notice Cooper's use of dramatic foreshadowing (hints given ahead of time of what is to happen later). Does it ever seem forced? You would expect a novel of the Revolution to be a story of action, excitement, daring deeds, bravery, etc. Pick out incidents in "The Spy" which fulfill this expectation. Does the movement of the story ever drag? Discuss the element of suspense (the keeping back of important plot information in order to hold the interest of the reader).

Style. Although there are many weaknesses in the style in which "The Spy" is written, yet there is something in the story so much worth while that it was hailed abroad and in this country as the first great American novel. The weaknesses of style are evident: poor character delineation, crude dialogue, etc. Anyone can pick these out. It is for you to pick out the good points which make "The Spy" a great novel of American events and types. What are some of these good points? How does the style of "The Spy" differ from that of a novel of to-day? Which do you like better? Compare "The Spy" with any other of Cooper's novels. What are some of Cooper's characteristics as a novelist?

SPECIFIC QUESTIONS ON GROUPS OF CHAPTERS

CHAPTERS I-V

1. Are all your sympathies with the American side? How does Cooper intend you to feel on the subject? 2. Which character introduced so far interests you the most? Do you think he is of most importance to the plot? Is the most important character usually the most interesting? Give examples from other novels you have read. 3. What do you think is the relationship between Birch, Harper, and Captain Wharton? 4. How does it happen that Harper recognizes Captain Wharton? 5. What does Captain Lawton want of Mr. Harper?

CHAPTERS VI-X

1. What do you think of Frances for asking Dunwoodie to save her brother? 2. Was Captain Wharton safer in his father's house than with the British troops? Why did he escape? 3. Comment on the fact that Birch directed Captain Wharton. Were you surprised to find that Birch was in the vicinity? 4. Why does Captain Lawton want to capture Birch? Why does Birch treat Lawton as he does? 5. Who were the Skinners? The Skinners, Cæsar, and Katy believe in "spookes." Was such a belief common at that time among educated people? What were some of the other superstitions of the time? of to-day?

CHAPTERS XI-XV

1. Why does Frances feel as she does toward Isabella? 2. Give a brief character sketch of each of the invalids being cared for in the Whartons' house. During the course of their convalescence does anything happen to reveal new sides of their characters? 3. What do you think of Dunwoodie? Has he deceived the two girls?

CHAPTERS XVI-XX

1. What do you think was on the paper Birch had? 2. Comment on Lawton's treatment of the Skinners. 3. Why do you think Birch treats Dunwoodie as he does? 4. What do you think of Birch's method of escape? In what other stories have you found the same device employed? 5. Comment on Frances's treatment of Dunwoodie. 6. From whom did the message on the stone come? What did it mean?

CHAPTERS XXI-XXV

1. Is a ring necessary to a marriage ceremony? Was it in those days? 2. How does Birch always know what is going on in time to give warning? 3. Why does Cooper have Isabella killed? Is it the only logical outcome for her? 4. Sum up the different opposing forces which come together in Chapters XXIII and XXIV: the Skinners, Birch, American soldiers, Frances and Isabella, etc.

CHAPTERS XXVI-XXX

1. Do you think Henry was a spy? Should a spy be killed? Give the story of Major André and of Nathan Hale. 2. What do you think of Colonel Singleton's actions? 3. Why does Cooper have Frances give unfavorable evidence? Does not Frances know what the American army thinks of Birch? 4. Why does Washington sign Henry's

death warrant? 5. Why is Harper brought in again? What do you make out of his part in the story? Why is he on Henry's side? 6. What do you think of Henry for escaping? Cooper uses the same device here that he used in the escape of Birch. Comment on it.

CHAPTERS XXXI-XXXV

1. Why does Cooper have Lawton killed? 2. Is Harper's identity a logical outcome to the story? is Birch's rôle? 3. Comment on Birch's death. 4. Trace the changes in your opinion of Birch. When did you first guess who he was? Why? 5. What does the last chapter tell you about the lives of the various characters which you did not already know?

QUESTIONS FROM THE COLLEGE ENTRANCE EXAMINATION BOARD WHICH MAY BE APPLIED TO "THE SPY"¹

1. Select from a novel some person who seems to you to have the traits essential to heroic greatness. Show what they are, and how the character possesses them (150 words).

2. Select a famous character in drama or prose fiction; mention three or four qualities that distinguish him, and refer to incidents in the plot that bring each of these characteristics into prominence.

3. Narrate a crisis in any novel, poem, or play as if you saw it enacted. Comment on the importance of this scene as a link in the plot.

4. Show by specific illustration from books that you have read how biographies and historical novels have increased your interest in history.

5. Choose any novel with which you are familiar. Name and discuss an incident in the plot that is a direct result of the character or personality of one of the actors.

6. Describe the villain in a novel or a play that you have read, and relate the effect of his actions upon the lives of the other characters.

7. Name two or three novels that you have read in which the setting is important to the story. Tell, in the case of *one* of these novels, in what ways the setting is important, either to the development of character or to the development of the plot.

8. It has been said that it is a waste of time to read historical novels. Explain, with specific illustrations drawn from your own reading, your reasons for agreeing or disagreeing with this statement.

¹ From examination questions copyrighted by the College Entrance Examination Board. Used by permission.

